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Reign of Selfishness

A Story of Concentrated Wealth.

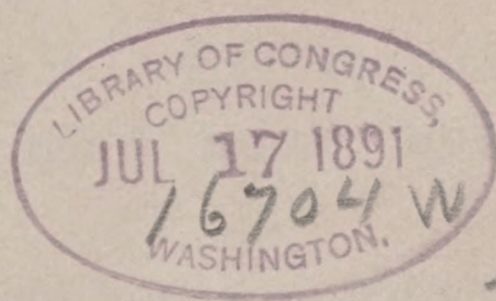
NEW YORK:
M. K. PELLETREAU, PUBLISHER,
45 ROSE STREET.

THE

REIGN OF SELFISHNESS.

A Story of Concentrated Wealth.

By
Samuel
Walker.



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of Brooklyn

THE REIGN OF SELFISHNESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE RIGHTS OF A DIRECTOR.

Two young men were driving through one of the side streets of the great city of Pactolus in Midasia. One was a denizen of the city. The other appeared to be a foreigner. The man holding the lines was Sydney Griffin; the other Clarence Coyne.

They were talking earnestly. Said Mr. Griffin to his companion, "I can take her if I wish."

"What?" said Coyne.

"I can take her riding if I wish," answered Griffin.

"Why, do you know her?" asked Coyne.

"No."

"Then how can you get her to go with you?"

"I will make her go," answered Griffin.

"How?"

"Why, take her."

"Who is she?"

"I don't know."

"She looks like a respectable girl."

"I suppose she is what you call a respectable girl," answered Griffin.

"Then how will you make her go with you?"

"Why, I will simply take her," Griffin said this impatiently.

"Now you are talking nonsense."

"Am I? I'll bet this rig against a thousand dollars * that I can go back and make her come with me."

"And you don't know her?"

"Never saw her before, don't know anything about her."

A look of incredulity came over the foreigner's face.

"Don't you believe it?" asked Griffin.

"I must confess I hardly do," answered Coyne with a smile.

"Will you take the bet?" asked Griffin.

The foreigner looked into his companion's face to see if he was in earnest, then said: "Are you trying one of your catches on me?"

"There is no catch about it," said Griffin hotly, "I mean what I say—I will bet this rig against a thousand dollars that I make that girl come with us."

"Are you serious?"

"As serious as a man can possibly be."

"Then there is no catch?"

* In referring to money the author will use the names applicable to American Currency (dollars and cents) instead of those applied to the coin of Midasia; the coins of both countries being very nearly alike in value.

"None whatever," replied Griffin, then he added eagerly, "Do you take me up?"

Coyne looked at his companion again to see if he was in earnest, raised his eyebrows, smiled and nodded.

"Done," said Griffin. He turned his team about and drove in the direction from which he had come.

Maud Holt, a graceful girl with a pretty face, was talking with an old lady in front of her home, "Good-by," she said as she was about to enter the house in front of which she was standing, "Good-by, I shall see you to-morrow."

At that moment, Griffin and his companion drove up. Griffin jumped to the pavement, and walked up to the girl, as he said, "My dear, I want you to take a drive with me."

The girl started, looked round and attempted to enter the house.

"Don't be in a hurry, my dear," Griffin said as he laid his hand on her arm. The girl shook his hand off angrily as she said,

"What do you mean, sir?" she opened the door. Griffin seized her roughly by the arm saying, "Come, no nonsense, I want to give you a ride."

The girl attempted to free herself as she gave a scream. Griffin held her firmly.

"That is the way you receive my kindness, is it?" he said as he seized her in his arms. He carried her to the curb and tossed her roughly in the wagon.

The girl was screaming all the time; he and his companions jumped in after her. They were about to drive off, when an old man rushed out of the house. He caught the horses by the bridle, Griffin lashed the horses with the whip, but the old man held them firmly, his teeth were clinched and every muscle was strained. He did not utter a word—the girl screamed and struggled. It required all the strength of Griffin and Coyne to prevent her from throwing herself out.

The scene described took not more than a moment to enact, but within that moment, there were numerous spectators; from nearly every door and window women and children were looking on with pale faces at the strange scene,—two men struggling with a girl in a road wagon, a man struggling with the horses in the street. Everywhere women and children were seen, but there was not another man in sight.

Suddenly the girl ceased to scream, Griffin had tied a handkerchief over her mouth; the horses became quiet, there was no sound but the struggles of the girl and the low curses of the men in the wagon.

“How dare you touch my daughter?” shouted the old man as soon as he regained his breath.

“How dare you touch my horses?” said Griffin in a strained voice, still struggling with the girl.

Some one shouted “Police.”

In an instant the cry of

“Police.”

“Police.”

“Police,” resounded through the street, until the silent street seemed like a Bedlam; one woman ran screaming toward the wagon with a broom; as if by magic the wagon was in a moment surrounded by an angry, screaming, gesticulating crowd of women, brandishing all sorts of household utensils. The clamor was such that not a word could be distinguished. Then a policeman appeared, fighting his way to the wagon; almost immediately, he was joined by another,—then another. They flourished their clubs and forced the women back.

“What’s the matter?” said one of the policemen, addressing the occupants of the wagon;—then there arose an indistinguishable clamor from the infuriated women, accompanied by all manner of threatening gestures.

Griffin turned to reply to the policeman,—the girl made a final effort to free herself, and succeeded in throwing herself out of the wagon; she fell in a heap and lay on the ground stunned.

The crowd stood breathless for a moment, then a cry of horror arose that was frightful to hear,—the crowd pressed around. Some women with her father’s aid picked her up, they carried her through a lane of horrified women, they laid her limp and deathlike upon the door-step of her home. There was a stream of blood coursing down her forehead,

—then another cry of horror burst from the crowd,—
some one shouted,

“Murder,” then there again rose a clamor horrible
in its significance,

“Murder.”

“Murder.”

“Murder.”

“Kill them, don’t let them escape.”

“Murderers”—“kill”—“kill”—“kill”—“Blood
for blood.”

“Kill”—“Kill”—“She is dead.”—“Kill the mur-
derers.”

“Kill”—“Kill”—“Kill.”

To such cries as these, women heedless of the
policeman’s warning, heedless of the clubs,—charged
upon Griffin and Coyne. Thick and fast the blows
fell upon the wagon and its occupants,—stones and
missiles began to fall upon them. Then the sharp
report of a pistol rang out above the warning of the
policeman, above the cries of the women, above the
sound of blows, following it came a woman’s scream,
—Another report.

Another scream,

Another report,

Another scream.

The women fell back panic-stricken before the
smoking muzzles of two revolvers in the hands of
Griffin and Coyne.

In their haste they struggled frantically to get

away,—some were knocked down, and trampled upon, some ran away screaming with terror, some retreated slowly and doggedly. In a few seconds a space was cleared around the wagon. The effect of the pistol shots was then visible, two women and a man lay upon the ground, the man was Maud's father.

A subdued cry of horror arose from the crowd as they saw the man and the women lying motionless; the man struggled to his feet,—his left arm hung useless by his side; he made a rush for Griffin and attempted to reach him with his right hand, but a policeman interposed and held him back. There was a momentary struggle, then the man again sank down faint from pain.

A squad of policemen in command of an officer then appeared, followed by a rabble of men and boys. The women retired to their doorways as the squad approached. Two of the policemen lifted the women and the wounded man, and at a motion from one of the women laid the man beside his daughter. Some of the women were about to carry the father and daughter into the house when the officer in command ordered them to leave the wounded where they were.

The other women were laid in the same doorway on a shawl furnished by one of the women. The officer then demanded:

“What is the meaning of this?”

A number of women crowded around, all speaking

together and at the same time gesticulating angrily. This was the response to his demand. The officer silenced them after a time.

“What is the cause of this trouble?” he asked one of the policemen. The officer stated what he and his fellow-policemen had witnessed on their arrival.

The wounded man was now sufficiently restored to consciousness to comprehend what was going on; he arose and staggered to the officer and said (pointing to Griffin and Coyne):

“Those fellows tried to abduct my daughter and have killed her,” then he made a rush at the wagon; the police easily stopped him. There was a renewal of the clamor by the crowd and after comparative silence was restored the sergeant looked at Griffin for an explanation.

“I merely wanted to take the girl for a ride, and she made a fool of herself, that’s all,” he said contemptuously as he gathered up the reins to drive off.

“They tried to abduct my child,” said the wounded man, “and I demand that they be arrested.”

“Arrest them” — “Arrest” — “Arrest” — “Kill them” — “Hang them,” shouted the crowd.

“You will have to go to the station with me,” said the sergeant to Griffin.

“To the station?” said Griffin contemptuously. “You are a fool, I was going to let this pass, but now I order you to arrest that fellow. I charge him

with attempted assault and an attempt to incite a riot."

"I have no time to listen to nonsense," said the officer, "you have shot three people and almost killed that girl; come out of the wagon or I shall remove you."

"You fool, I will remove you. Do you see that?" said Griffin angrily, turning down the lapel of his coat and showing a badge. The sergeant glanced at it and turned pale.

"I beg pardon," he said humbly, "I hope you won't take amiss what I have said, I didn't know——"

"What are you on the police force for but to know?" said Griffin angrily.

"If your honor can overlook this offence, it will not be repeated," said the sergeant, looking pleadingly at Griffin.

"I make no promises," said Griffin. "Take this fellow to Justice Shaw and have him punished,—give him three months, no, d—— him, give him six."

His eye fell upon the group of women caring for the girl, "Ah, the girl, give her—well, I won't dispose of her case now, but see to it that she is on hand when she is wanted, do you hear?" The sergeant nodded respectfully. "Now clear this rabble out of the way or I will drive over them;" so saying he handed the sergeant a small piece of paper. The sergeant

motioned to his men and they charged the crowd with drawn clubs. The street was cleared in a moment, and Griffin with his friend drove down the street in elegant style with a dash of blood on their wagon wheels.

"You directors seem to have a good deal of power here," said Coyne.

"Yes," replied Griffin, "A director in the United Supply Company has more power than most kings. Money is the greatest power in the world."

CHAPTER II.

DON'T THEY GIVE A MAN A TRIAL?

THE sergeant or officer in command sent one of his men for a stretcher. The man returned in a few minutes. They laid the wounded man upon it.

Two of the officers lifted it. At a sign from the sergeant the police formed a solid square around it.

"March," said the sergeant.

In the midst of howling threats and execrations the squad with their prisoner marched down the street.

The crowd followed hooting.

They marched direct to the police court, a plain bare room. There were several officers in the room, all armed, two or three spectators, one lawyer, and Judge Shaw. None of the witnesses of the assault were permitted so enter the room.

The lawyer recognized the wounded prisoner, shook hands with him and conversed with him while a policeman stood guard over him.

The justice was engaged in an examination.

The sergeant made his complaint to the clerk. "Lyman Holt," called the justice after a lapse of about five minutes. The policeman motioned the wounded prisoner to the bar.

The lawyer stepped to his side.

"Lyman Holt," said the magistrate, glancing at the complaint before him, "you are charged with attempted assault on the person of Sydney Griffin, also a breach of the peace in attempting to incite a riot. What have you to say?"

The lawyer answered, "I appear for the prisoner and ask for an adjournment to procure witnesses. From what I am informed the prisoner was simply protecting his daughter from abduction."

"Sergeant, what have you to say to that? Where is the complainant?" said the justice.

The sergeant handed the justice a piece of paper.

The justice glanced at it. His manner changed instantly. "Prisoner," he said, "you have been guilty of a most outrageous assault and I commit you to the labor bureau of the United Supply Company for six months—I——"

"But if your honor please," interposed the lawyer, "we can demonstrate that the prisoner is guilty of no offence. We can bring a cloud of witnesses to show——"

"Mr. Ray," said the justice, "there is no use wasting time on this case, it is disposed of. Look at this," and he handed the lawyer a piece of paper.

The lawyer glanced at the paper and showed it to the prisoner.

"I can do nothing for you, Mr. Holt, he is a director of the company. I am sorry for you, bear up

like a man, six months won't be long," so saying the lawyer shook hands with the prisoner and the prisoner fell in a swoon on the floor.

The paper which the sergeant gave the Judge was written in pencil and read as follows,

"Six months,"

"Griffin, director."

The paper bore the seal of the Great United Supply Company.

One of the spectators, a young man, spoke to an officer: "Don't they give a man a trial before they send him to prison?"

The officer looked at him in surprise, "Where are you from?" he asked.

"I was born in this city," the young man replied, "but I have been away for some years."

"Then you were very foolish to come back. What is your name?"

"Leon Pelon," replied the young man. The officer looked at him for a moment, then turned and walked away.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT COMPANY.

ARBITRARY arrests and unjust imprisonments were by no means uncommon in Pactolus and yet Midasia was not a barbaric country; on the contrary, it had reached the highest stage of enlightenment.

It had reached that high state of enlightenment where the citizen ignores everything except self-interest.

“Have I a direct personal interest in this matter?”

“How does it concern my personal estate?”

“Can I make any money out of it?”

“How does it affect my pocket?”

“Why should I give my time and attention to it if I cannot make money out of it?”

Such were the tests and declarations applied by the citizens of Midasia and especially of Pactolus to all questions affecting the welfare of their nation and the common interests of the people.

A craze for money-making had taken possession of the citizens of Pactolus and everything was forgotten and sacrificed to this craze.

As a consequence a once public-spirited, patriotic and liberty-loving people, when too late, found

themselves in the power of an oligarchy which reduced the whole nation to a condition of practical slavery.

This condition was brought about by such insidious means as to be scarcely noticed until the people were dependent on the men who controlled the oligarchy.

“Every man for himself,” was the motto of the people of this nation, and they believed that they were too smart to waste any of their time or energies on any concern which did not give them a direct cash return.

“I have no time to work for anybody or anything but myself,” was a common remark of these citizens, and in a very short time the whole nation was working for twenty-five hundred rich families, working like slaves to make those twenty-five hundred rich families richer.

The Great United Supply Company was the most powerful and was also the richest organization in the world; it might be more proper to say that it was the most wonderful chain of organization that ever existed, its capital amounted to thousands of millions of dollars, it had its agencies in every inhabitable place on the globe.

It was hated, feared and its will respected wherever men desired either money or liberty. It was hated and feared by those forming a part of it, those connected with it, and those outside of it. Its only

object was to make money. Each day saw that object growing in an increased measure.

Warren Stillpool was its President, a man of masterly mind, cold, passionless, inexorable; what he desired to do he did regardless of consequences. He would not kill a fly unnecessarily, but he would sacrifice the lives of ten thousand men, if necessary, to the furtherance of his interests. His ability to fathom men was startling. Half of his great abilities and success lay in his discernment in selecting his lieutenants and chaining them to his interest. By this great faculty he held them as firmly to his fortunes as though they were confined by lock and bolt.

Another element which contributed greatly to his success was his ability to accurately weigh and place a proper value on elements favorable and unfavorable to his interests.

He had an utter contempt for what is known as "Popular Opinion."

"What is 'popular opinion'?" he would say, "an aggregation of particles which will not fuse and which is likely to separate into particles immediately after coming together.

"It is like a flock of birds, which may be scattered by a gesture, a sound or a blow."

He often said, "Men and women have too many personal interests to look after, to give attention to common interests. They are too busy earning their

living—with their business interests—in matters of their individual concern, to spend their time with anything that is not interwoven with their personal affairs.”

“Society is so conducted that it takes all of the average man’s time to make a living and he cannot afford to devote any of it to even the gravest of public concerns.”

“Public spirit is of necessity spasmodic and short-lived.”

For these reasons Mr. Stillpool had no fear of public opinion interfering with any of his doings, even though they were what is termed “outrages” on individual rights or on the rights of the body politic.

Every branch of trade and commerce, every product of the soil, the bowels of the earth, the compass of the sea, every creation of the brain or hand of man were under his control or were being irresistibly drawn toward him.

At the time of the arrest of Mr. Holt the great company had been in existence about one year. The Banner Company, its predecessor, had been in existence for a number of years.

With the aid of the great modern abridgers of time, electricity and the engines of concentrated motive power, the company from its inception increased in wealth and strength.

About three years before the inception of the company, perhaps it is safe to say, many years be-

fore, there existed similar organizations, but on a less comprehensive scale; there were many such in all parts of the globe, timidly experimenting with the policy of uniting for the purpose of concentrating strength and strangling suicidal competition.

Mr. Stillpool conceived the idea of fusing into a solid force all the corporations and organizations of sufficient importance to contribute strength to the united body and at the same time of crushing out the unimportant and weak ones.

Up to his thirtieth year Mr. Stillpool had been a clerk in the Oil House of Mr. Holt, his salary had been small, and as salaries went, it was all he was worth. He manifested no special aptitude for the business. What he had to do he did without meriting or receiving either praise or blame; nobody could say that he was what was called "smart," no intelligent person would pronounce him stupid; he might have been called a dreamer who dreamed with one eye open. With that eye he managed to see all that was going on around him.

Mr. Holt's business controlled a special line of oil or rather a special method of treating it; the business was lucrative and Mr. Holt's capital accumulated rapidly.

After Mr. Stillpool had turned his thirtieth year, the business of Mr. Holt collapsed.

CHAPTER IV.

“I DON’T DO THINGS FROM POLICY.”

LYMAN HOLT was one of the sterling business men of Pactolus—a man of stern integrity and honorable in all his dealings.

He was about sixty years of age and still a very handsome man. He had a fine physique, an open, honest eye, and a ruddy face crowned by a cloud of fine, white hair.

He was in the oil business—manufacturing lubricating oil under a patent process.

His income was about \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year.

His family consisted of one son who was at college, and a daughter about eighteen years of age.

One afternoon, about two years before the events narrated in the opening chapters, Mr. Holt was in his office chatting with Dr. Clark, when two gentlemen entered.

“How do you do, Mr. Sinclair? Mr. Reed, I am glad to see you,” said Mr. Holt, shaking hands. “Be seated. Excuse me,” he added, turning to the doctor. “Gentlemen, this is Dr. Clark.”

“Ah! doctor, eh!” said Mr. Reed. “I hope you are squeezing some of his fat fees into oil.”

"No, no," said the doctor, "I don't speculate. I can make more money feeling the pulse of my patients, than the pulse of the market."

And the doctor bowed himself out.

The gentlemen made themselves comfortable, and as they smoked they discussed trade in a general way.

After a while, Mr. Reed said: "By the way, Holt, how would you like to sell out?"

"Sell out?" said Holt, in surprise.

"Yes, and retire. You have been a pretty hard worker for a long time and I should think you would like a little rest."

"Well," said Holt, "as far as rest is concerned, I never felt less need of it, and I have no desire to sell out. Why do you ask such a question?"

"Well, there was no special reason," said Sinclair, "except that the Banner Company is going into your line and may run you a little hard in competition."

"I never yet was afraid of competition, and I hope I never will be," said Holt rather warmly.

"I don't suppose you are," said Reed. "But at the same time it is pretty hard to buck against the company."

"I don't think I am bucking against the company," said Holt.

"But you are," said Reed.

"I don't see how that can be," said Holt. "The

company does not make the kind of oil that I do."

"But they want to," said Sinclair with a meaning smile.

"Well," said Holt, hotly; "they can't and they won't."

"Now, now!" said Reed, soothingly, "there is no occasion for getting angry. This is business. The company want to make a proposition in a friendly spirit."

"Well," said Holt, "what is the proposition in a friendly spirit?"

"Of course," said Reed, "you understand that the company is very rich and has considerable power——"

"I don't care a d——m for their riches or their power," burst out Mr. Holt.

"Now, one moment, please. I know you don't care for that but, as a matter of policy——"

"Policy! I don't do things from policy," burst out Holt."

"I know you don't, and I was unfortunate in the selection of words. I meant to say, as a matter of business don't you think it would be better to be on friendly terms with the company?"

"I don't care whether I am on friendly terms with them or not," said Mr. Holt with dignity.

Mr. Reed smiled good-naturedly as he made a gesture of despair.

“We don’t suppose you do care for the company. Why should you? But the fact is the company want to branch out in your line and it was suggested that your plant might be purchased. Now, that is the whole business, blunt and to the point. That is,” Reed added with a smile, “provided a thing can come to a point if it is blunt.”

“Well,” said Holt, with a grim smile, “we may find a point and a period too. Now you must excuse me, gentlemen, if I seem a little discourteous; but I will tell you frankly that I do not like either the company or its methods of doing business. Now, what do you propose?”

“It was suggested,” said Sinclair, “that you set a price on your plant and the Company will consider it.”

“But,” said Holt, “suppose I don’t want to sell?”

“I have no reason to feel any but the most friendly feelings toward you, and in that spirit as a friend, I advise you to sell.” This was said by Reed, gravely and earnestly. “Now, Mr. Holt,” he added, “if you will consider the matter we will call to see you again.” He paused—“When?”

“For an answer as to whether I will sell or not?”

“And your price,” added Reed.

“Provided it gets as far as that,” said Holt.

“Always provided,” said Reed.

“Well, then, Wednesday next. Is that convenient?” said Holt.

"Thanks, that will do," said Sinclair; and the interview ended.

By the following Wednesday, Mr. Holt had made up his mind that he would offer his plant to the company for \$100,000, which was a fair valuation, all things considered.

He had not come to this conclusion until he had discussed the matter with a number of practical men.

Messrs. Reed and Sinclair received his offer, and said they would present it to the company.

The next day they returned and made Mr. Holt an offer of \$50,000 and position as superintendent at a salary of \$5,000.

Mr. Holt indignantly rejected the offer and said, "Gentlemen, I have carried on this business single-handed for twenty-five years and with your kind permission I shall continue to do so."

CHAPTER V.

MR. HOLT FIGHTS THE COMPANY.

THE next week Mr. Holt's agents in the oil fields informed him that the railroads had refused to ship supplies to him. Indignant demands of the cause on the Railroad Company brought polite replies to the effect that their contract with the Banner Company taxed their facilities to the utmost.

Living in a free country, a rich man, clear-headed, doing a large business and having an influential connection both business and social, Mr. Holt considered such conduct an outrage. He protested, sputtered, talked about his "rights," the "obligations of common carriers," "justice" and all such nonsense. He undertook to fight and failed. He tried to prepare his oil at the wells and carry it to the market by water at ruinous expense, and failed. He tried the courts and failed; the legislature and failed. His antics were as amusing to the Banner Company as the struggles of the fly in the spider web are supposed to be to the cunning spider.

In six months he was bankrupt and retired, broken in health, broken in fortune and with a broken heart, and as we have seen two years after sent

to prison for defending his daughter from abduction.

“Strange vicissitudes of fortune,” many of his friends said in sympathetic comment and hundreds of them subsequently met with fortunes which were fully as bad as that of Mr. Holt.

There was a kindly current of human sympathy which went out to the struggling manufacturer fighting for his rights and justice, and any amount of wordy encouragement ; but of practical aid, none. Everybody wished him well,—success and even triumph, but no one gave him help of a practical character.

What could his friends and neighbors do ? If they could do anything, why should they go out of their way to do it ? Friendship is very well, but it must not interfere with business ; this is a selfish world. Money was what they were after. They had no time for anything else.

They would have been pleased to have aided him, but the rule was “Every man for himself.”

One of his friends summed the matter up thus, “he is in the position of a man in a whirl-pool, if we go to his aid we may be swamped ourselves ; self-preservation is the first law of nature, he has brought the trouble on himself, he should have compromised,—life is too short to waste any of it in trying to save cranks.”

“But,” protested another, “he is fighting for a

principle, what happens to him may happen to all of us. I tell you there is danger in allowing this thing to go on; we ought to join forces and aid Holt."

"Nonsense," said another, "his is an isolated case. I don't think the company can do any general harm, there is a limit to their powers of mischief, and if there was anything of a general onslaught made by the company against the business interests of the community, there would be a general uprising which would clean it out. In the mean time, poor Holt is unfortunate, he will have to go, as one of the atoms which stand in the way of corporate progress and the spirit of combination which is one of the irrepressible elements of the age."

Mr. Holt's business was sold with its secrets, patents and processes,—the Banner Company were the purchasers; then the dreaming of Mr. Stilpool became practical, his opportunity had come, the company took him into its employ. Inside of one year he developed great skill as a negotiator and organizer.

In the East were large factories and mills capable of supplying the world with all kinds of commodities—cotton and woollen goods, shoes and household supplies. Such was their capacity that they could by working from four to six months stock the markets of the whole country with goods sufficient to last a year or more. They were a source of national pride and national ruin.

Between these mills and factories there was a suicidal competition.

The idea of utilizing the vast capital of these mills and factories by concentrating or consolidating their business with that of the Banner Company was conceived and planned by Stilpool ; he presented it to the managers of the Banner Company. The idea was scouted as visionary and impracticable, but he brought facts and figures to his aid, which caused the opposition to soften and dissolve until the feasibility of the scheme found its most enthusiastic advocates in its former most incredulous opponents.

The directors called a meeting to discuss the matter, and Stilpool, after laying his facts, figures, and plans before the board, said,

“The object of this corporation is to make money, it was created to make money in one branch of the oil business, it now makes money in all of its branches. It has sovereign control of one product of the country, its members control a large portion of the railroad interests of the whole country. Why should those two great interests in the hands of the same men be kept separate? The saving in agencies and salaries and general wear and tear will go far towards swelling the dividends, and much of the money which now goes outside of the company will be kept within its circle.

“It seems incongruous, yet we see so-called dry-goods stores selling under one roof and under one

management everything a man or woman can wear or use; various necessities of life which a few years ago you would be obliged to seek in one hundred and fifty different stores, in one hundred different kinds of business, you now find in one store, under one man's control. One great expense in business is labor. As you concentrate business you reduce the demand for labor, here you see a vast profit in saved pay-rolls. This is done profitably on a small scale, why not on a large scale? It is done retail, why not wholesale? The more you concentrate business the less it costs to manage it. Then look at the expense of competition, why should capitalists waste their efforts in fighting among themselves? They must live on masses who are ready and willing to toil for them. By concentrating these various interests your incomes will be expanded to an unheard-of extent."

Mr. Stilpo~~od~~ was sent to negotiate with the Eastern mill owners and manufacturers. After a few visits and in the course of a few months, several of the largest were won over; those who refused to be convinced by arguments were brought into line by harsher measures; those who stood out stubbornly were crushed as was poor Mr. Holt.

The capital of the company was now enormous and its power terrible; the great grain syndicate next united its interests with the Banner Company, thus the grain product of the West, the manufacto-

ries of the East, the oil and coal product of the seaboard, the great commodities of the South as well as a large portion of the railroads of the country were united under one management. Mr. Stilpool's prophecy was fulfilled. The skilful manipulation of these interests with the absence of competition, the power to regulate the supply to meet the demand, yielded the company vast profits and enabled the directors to pay large dividends. The stock of the company rose rapidly. Then it was discovered that the charter of the Banner Company was not broad enough and its powers and its capital was limited. A new company was formed, and a charter procured from the legislature, worded so as to give it unlimited power and unlimited capital.

Mr. Stilpool had not forgotten his self-interest; from his position in the company, he had been able to benefit friends and profited by the benefit of his friends, so that in the course of less than one year, his interest in the company had increased from a small salary to a large amount of dividend-bearing stock. He also had a large constituency among the stockholders, who recognized his services and his ability to further serve them by electing him, in turn, secretary, vice-president, and president of the company.

CHAPTER VI.

“EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF.”

THE moral tone of the community was in a condition to welcome the Company and its consequences. Vast numbers of people proclaimed by word and deed that they were tired of what was called “goody-goody” conduct. They emphasized their contempt for honor and integrity, by applauding success though won by flagrant treachery or even theft. Nowhere were lax morals more apparent than in the selection of men for public offices.

If a candidate was what was termed “smart,” he might safely ignore or flagrantly violate most of his moral obligations without fear of losing the suffrages of his constituents, and in many instances a swaggering contempt for honesty and morality resulted in the election of a candidate by an overwhelming majority, especially where honesty or morality was the issue.

In explanation of such results the press would say that the people liked the “manly frankness of the rascal” or that the people had “rebuked hypocrisy.”

Even the citizens from whom most was expected, who had most at stake, would vote for a man of

notorious incapacity or dishonesty for no other reason than that they or some of their friends had a personal interest in his election.

The political methods were such that a self-respecting man could not seek office without doing or becoming a party to acts which were not only dishonest or dishonorable, but even acts bordering on crime. Selfishness rather than public spirit was the motive power. Lax morals were apparent in the shirking of public duties, especially the duties of a juror. Many judges were corrupt and perpetrated the most cruel outrages in relation to the liberty and property of citizens.

When we consider what the people had to contend against, it is not to be wondered at that they yielded to temptation and followed in the train of corruption, which seemed to be indigenous to the times. There was the ever present example of the most prodigal extravagance and applauded success. A man's expenditures were the index of his wealth and his wealth was an index of his worth. To imitate the extravagances of a petty prince was the highest ambition of society, to get into the circle of those who could imitate such extravagance was the ambition of most people outside of that circle; then came the struggle to get the money for keeping up such extravagant methods of living; and a desperate struggle it was—honor, justice and friendship were forgotten and even good name and personal liberty

were risked in the struggle. Speculation was rife in every line of life and business. Business was demoralized.

In the mad struggle for wealth, every obligation was forgotten. Friends betrayed friends, promises were broken and the most solemn obligations were ignored.

Men, women and children gambled; distrust was the rule, and more than ever "every man for himself," became the motto for individuals. The doings of the company were heralded abroad in the most extravagant manner and all sorts of interest clamored for admission to its privileges, each acquisition seemed to enhance the value of its stock; it was a wild era of speculation. The wildest rumors were set afloat in regard to the transactions of the company.

To pay tribute to the Cæsar in being was the effort of every one. Some one has said, "If you don't need help everybody is ready to help you." Never was this saying more effectually exemplified; everything that the citizens could do to aid in the aggrandizement of the company was done eagerly and with alacrity.

Legislatures were memorialized to grant more and more extraordinary powers. Powers and rights heretofore unheard of were granted almost without question—measures which had always been regarded as inimical to personal liberty or dangerous to public weal were introduced in the legislature and those

who opposed them were hooted at as public enemies and after a brief struggle (if a futile remonstrance followed by a storm of hisses or a sneering speech could be called a struggle) passed.

A legislator remarked:

“The people know what they are after, the legislature knows what it is after, and the company knows what it is after.” “Every one for himself and for money.”

The company industriously reported every case where a fortune was made or advanced in its stocks, and with equal industry suppressed the report of individual losses.

Until it had been in existence about two years the company's management was honest. Then the directors began a series of manipulations of the earnings of the company, which in time brought them nearly all into the hands of the directors; thousands and thousands of people who had money invested in the company's stock were almost reduced to starvation as the company passed dividend after dividend.

It must not be supposed that all this demoralization of society went on without protest. Such was not the case. There was a cry of reform all along the line. To do it justice, the press did its duty and exposed frauds, corruption and veniality. The pulpit flung out its warnings of the dangers and the awful consequences of forgotten obligations.

Publicists and essayists demonstrated in a thousand different ways, that civilization could not stand the strain of the corrupting influence at work on the body politic.

Professional and business men discussed each new evidence of moral turpitude with serious mien. Grand jurors made presentments commenting upon the dangerous moral condition of society.

Reform societies were started and flourished; reform became a fashionable craze and a fashionable jest; still crimes multiplied; injustice spread and corruption flourished.

In spite of all these efforts to promote reform (it cannot be said that the efforts were not serious), there was a feeling of impending evil, which seemed to urge the people to avoid the threatened danger, and yet, what could they do—what could all the editors, preachers, essayists, and reformers do against the system which was honey-combing society with corruption? Everybody knew it was wrong and admitted that it was dangerous and that it ought to be remedied; but what could be done, what could people do with a system which held them as if chained? Money was the god they worshipped, without money man was a nonentity and the motto seemed to be, “Get money anyway,” and so long as a man kept out of prison, it mattered little how he got it.

The effect on business rapidly became apparent.

"Business is dull," was the constant cry. Manufacturers in all parts of the country had to close their factories. In some instances the company took the plant and retained the former owner as superintendent; in other cases the owners were not so fortunate. Mercantile houses met with the same fate. "Business is dull," was their cry. So that in every part of the country and especially in large cities, there was an ever-increasing number of men of good business ability, out of employment.

Some of these men had money upon which they could live, but the great majority had saved very little from the wreck of their business. To them, immediate employment was a necessity.

Men who had been spending five thousand, ten thousand, twenty-five thousand and even fifty thousand dollars a year found their income cut off oftentimes with only a few months' warning. Men with a small income, from one to five thousand dollars a year, were in the same position.

These people formed the great middle class, they were the intelligent, conservative and dependable middle class, the solid phalanx behind which governments have always sat in security while any just claim to confidence remained.

This great breakwater of intelligence standing behind the people and the government on one side, and anarchy on the other, went down before the company's methods. The strength of a nation lies

in its middle class. The very poor are dangerous. The very rich are dangerous,—one is reckless and the other insolent.

The middle class found itself rapidly dwindling away. Almost all branches of business were absorbed by the company and the business was systematized in such a way that it was done with less than one-half of the help than when performed by private or independent individuals or corporations. This was especially apparent in the clerical departments of business.

A great portion of the inhabitants were out of employment, hunger was not unknown to the best and most industrious, meetings were held and riots threatened, communistic doctrines were eagerly embraced by thoughtful, intelligent men; “hard times” was the companion of the people in its most rigorous form, and charity was strained to its utmost limit by the stress of the times.

A gentleman said, “Soon there will be but two classes—the very rich and the very poor.”

The poor were not limited to the unintelligent class; but intelligent, educated people of ability, merchants, bankers and mechanics, artisans and professional men, clerks and book-keepers whose occupations were absorbed by the company were all included in the poverty-stricken class. They found themselves sinking into poverty as helplessly as though they were in the midst of a quicksand; they

saw their belongings being absorbed by the monster corporation, and many of them were unable to save a dollar.

The profits of their different occupations were pouring almost directly into the coffers of the company; such property as they had acquired, such business as they had created or inherited, they could no more hold than they could hold a handful of fine, dry sand; everything was slipping away.

The press faithfully chronicled the condition of the country. It told of the myriad business failures. It gave graphic accounts of the gradual reduction of wages of clerks and other working people and especially in the class where a low grade of intelligence and no education was required; it told of the mode of life of these people, their suffering, their degraded condition and the debasing effect of grinding poverty. Great enterprise was displayed by these journals in sending writers of fine descriptive ability amongst poverty-stricken people and they produced articles which fairly bristled with horrors; they were made so interesting that at times the daily papers in the simple relation of the truth outdid the wildest extravagances of the romance-laden story paper.

Injustice, cruelties, wrongs, and outrages were laid before the people with facts, figures, dates, localities, names and causes.

The clerk, the merchant, the manufacturer, the

official, the legislator, each and all read these facts and when they had read them, threw their paper aside, expressed inexpensive sympathy and said, "It does not concern me, every man must take care of himself." Warnings of approaching danger to individual and locality were unheeded, people saw the effect of the encroachment of the company and saw it come almost to their own threshold, even crushing their next-door neighbor, and they said, "As long as I am safe, I need not trouble myself about it." They saw it strike at their near relatives and said, "I am too weak to fight the company and while I hold my own I will not complain." Every man seemed to indulge in a wild hope that some lucky stroke of fortune would give him enough money to make him independent of his fellows and that circumstances would place him in a position where he could participate in the prosperity of the company.

The dividends of the company were passed time and again.

The board of directors of the company refused to render statements of what became of the earnings.

Stockholders cited them before the courts, and the courts sustained the action of the board.

The consolidated board in all its branches numbered about two thousand five hundred members. At a meeting one of the members said,

"The earnings and the product of this country are

little enough for the support of twenty-five hundred families, if they live as people should live, and I see no reason why we should pay any more dividends."

"What will you do with the earnings?" asked a member.

"Vote it to ourselves in the way of salaries," was the reply.

"What will the stockholders say?" asked another.

"They will say," answered this bold director, "that we are a lot of swindlers and robbers and thieves and rascals, and that we are dishonest and unworthy of our trust, and they will say a lot of other impolite and vulgar things. People who have a grievance are very vulgar, and even if their complaints are just, their complaints are soon voted a bore."

"And then?" queried several of the directors.

"And then we will enjoy our incomes just the same."

"How can we do it?" asked one of the board.

"How can we do it?" said the director with a laugh, "why by simply doing it."

"Won't it be inquired into and stopped?" asked a director.

"Yes," said the proposer, "everything can be inquired into, but it won't do any good. We control the courts and the legislature and we can do as we

please. Only about ten thousand or fifteen thousand people have stock in the company and the great mass of the people are too selfish to care for their grumbling. In fact I think they will be rather pleased with our smartness in the matter. Gentlemen, selfishness is the finest attribute in man's nature to those who know how to utilize it."

The advice of this gentleman was followed to the great profit of the two thousand five hundred directors. And in a short time, with a very few exceptions, the company had nearly all the people of the country dependent upon it for employment.

There were a few people who were able to make a meagre living outside of the company's employment. There were a few who had saved ready money, but the great mass worked in the company's plants and for very low wages.

There was only one grade of employment, and the wages were in all cases about the same. All the employees, whether clerks, bookkeepers, mechanics or laborers, were called laborers. They worked under superintendents and overseers.

The directors daily grew more insolent in the treatment of the people, but the people were utterly helpless.

The directors carried with them whips, the end of the lash of which was supplied with a metal tassel. These whips were called "scorpions." They would cut into the flesh at every blow.

Some of them were of silver and even gold. Those the ladies carried were works of art.

Both sexes used them on the slightest provocation and in a most cruel manner. The overseers and superintendents were also supplied with these weapons, and used them to enforce the discipline of the work shops and factories.

These changes were gradual.

The company's advance was slow but sure.

The company never yielded a point or receded from a position it had taken.

CHAPTER VII.

DR. CLARK—LABORER.

AFTER the police had taken her father away, the women carried Maud Holt into the house; they laid her on her bed in one of the miserable rooms which she called her home.

The women remained with her until she was sufficiently recovered to sit up.

Towards evening the girl roused herself from her grief sufficiently to prepare supper for the family, which consisted of her father, her brother Randolph, and Dr. Clark.

Dr. Clark was Maud's accepted lover.

In setting the table she laid four plates. Suddenly she recollected that her father's place would not be occupied, and her grief burst out afresh.

Randolph came in at about seven o'clock, looking very gloomy.

"O Rand!" cried the girl, as she threw herself into his arms and again burst into a passion of tears. As she sobbed on his breast she tried to tell him of her father's evil fortune.

"I know all about it," he said as he placed the weeping girl in a chair. He then went to the window and stood gazing out into the darkness.

A step was heard outside; the door opened and a tall fine-looking man entered.

This was Dr. Rufus Clark, Maud's affianced husband.

Rufus Clark was thirty-five years of age. He had graduated with high honors at college, studied medicine, had taken his degree and by his natural abilities and the aid of wealthy and influential friends rapidly built up a large practice.

His family was wealthy and his entrance on manhood gave promise of an exceptionally successful career. He was now laborer No. 5864, in squad 908, in the company's sugar storage yard. He worked from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M., and earned five dollars per week.

It was difficult to recognize in the coarsely clad, horny-handed laborer the petted child of fortune who had once been an ornament to the most brilliant drawing rooms, as well as a respected and brilliant member of his profession.

Yet, there he stands—a day laborer tired out by his day's work. Strange as it may seem, he was guilty of no vice or crime which might have caused him to become an outcast from the sphere in which he was born.

He was not a drunkard, a gambler, an idler, nor a criminal. He was merely one of millions of victims of a system which degraded not only his special circle or set, but his race.

His father had been a business man of large ability and great enterprise, starting in life with a small retail book store. He increased his business by degrees until he had one of the largest stores in the city. Recognizing the fact that there were larger margins of profits in other trades, he gradually took in other branches of business. He carried on one or two at first, then increased the number until the stock of his store was as varied as a public fair. With pride he would say: "A customer can purchase at retail everything he or she needs without going from under my roof."

"How convenient," people said. "What a benefit," "How much trouble it saves;" and they might have added, how much trouble it made.

Clark's bazaar ruined or drove out of business more than five hundred men and women who were earning a moderate living in small retail stores, and he deprived of labor more than a thousand clerks, men and women.

He secured the income of these five hundred retailers, and it was a princely income for one man. He did it by what is called "fair competition."

He paid his debts, he worked hard, and he lived like a prince.

People said he was a great benefactor, because he gave employment to so many people. The same people knew that he did not employ half so many

clerks or pay nearly as high wages as did the five hundred small dealers whom he had displaced.

The general public love the glitter and glare of enterprise and success. What mattered it to the public if five hundred or a thousand people were ousted from business, or thousands lost their employment? At Clark's things were as cheap or cheaper than at the smaller stores. At Clark's you could often pick up bargains. At Clark's there was always a jostling crowd. Clark's looked prosperous and was in a democratic way fashionable.

Clark was a big fish; he had swallowed lots of little fish, but unfortunately for Clark, there was a bigger fish than he.

Half a dozen gentlemen of large means met one evening and had a good dinner. They felt very buoyant and happy. They had been engaged in a little speculation and had greatly increased their wealth, and they chatted and sipped their wine.

Accidentally, Clark's bazaar and its wonderful prosperity was referred to. These gentlemen discussed it in an idle way for some time, then one of their number said, "Why can't we use a little of our surplus cash in a bazaar? It will pay a nice percentage."

"How do you mean?" said another.

"Run it as a stock concern," said the first speaker.

"Whom could you get to run it?" said a third.

"No trouble about that," said a fourth. "Get

Clark's superintendent. I think it's a good scheme. I don't know of anything which will pay better for a steady."

"Why not buy Clark out?" said the first speaker.

The company separated after having resolved to "look into it."

They did "look into it" and saw Clark, offered to buy him out or freeze him out, whichever he chose.

Clark had too intimate a knowledge of money to stand in the way of that powerful engine, and he sold out clean.

Clark was now a capitalist, twice a millionaire. He might have lived luxuriously on his money, but he was a business man and wanted to make more. He would have opened another bazaar, but a member of the syndicate had in a friendly way hinted to him that the syndicate would not have any competition, so he speculated in the Supply Company's stock which was then beginning to boom, made money, lost, made and lost again, recovered, and made a final loss, lost heart and became dependent on his son who was building up a practice in medicine.

As the grip of the company became firmer and firmer on the industries and products of the country, and the profits were more and more diverted to the coffers of the company, Dr. Clark's income decreased. He had plenty to do, but people did not have money to pay doctors' bills. Things went on from bad to worse, until he, with thousands of

others, was obliged to abandon his profession and take employment as a day laborer or at anything better that he could get.

His rich and influential friends could do nothing for him, as those who were not as poor as he had all they could do to look after the interests of their near relatives. In fact it was through the favor of a friend that he was able to hold his place as a laborer.

There were tens of thousands of learned physicians and skilled chemists whom the company could employ when needed for a mere song. In fact education and ability counted for nothing. They were a detriment in the struggle for bread.

The overseers protested against the employment of educated men in the company's yard. "They ain't no good," one of them said. "You don't want no education to roll a barrel of sugar."

But Dr. Clark had his choice. He could either work fifteen hours a day for five dollars a week, or starve.

Such was the man who entered the room. Maud rose with an effort and half-staggered across the room.

Dr. Clark caught her in his arms.

"They have taken father away," she cried.

"Where?" he exclaimed, holding her off so as to look into her face. "Where?"

"To prison."

"To prison? Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. My head hurts so; they say it's my fault," and the poor girl moaned piteously. Then she looked up eagerly into his face.

"It wasn't my fault, was it, was it?"

"No, no, of course not," he said, consolingly. "How did it happen?"

"Oh, she made a fool of herself as usual and got us into all this trouble," exclaimed her brother in a despairing tone.

"But I couldn't go with him. Could I, Ruf, could I, could I? And the poor girl clung to the doctor as she looked appealingly into his face.

"Why, what does she mean?" asked the doctor, turning to her brother.

Her brother related the facts. At the mention of the name of Griffin, the doctor became deadly pale.

"It is horrible," he said. "It would have been better if you had offended any one rather than Griffin."

"But I couldn't help it. I was frightened and he was so rough, and I didn't know they would send father to prison. I couldn't go with him, could I?" But the poor girl looked in vain for encouragement in the face of her lover. He looked very grave for a moment, then said:

"You might have acted a little more gently, so as not to provoke him. We may lose our work. What could we do then?"

If, to the average reader, this seems an unheroic

way for a lover and brother to speak and act in regard to conduct such as in the incident related, let such reader go among the poor bread winners, and he may be able to hear of similar matters treated and discussed in a similar manner, when it is a question of the saving, winning or earning of a few dollars.

Yes, and in these present times and in all great centres of civilization. A grave question confronts us here. Are we not, in so steadily and selfishly pursuing pennies and dollars, becoming a nation of spiritless milksops?

The girl cast herself loose from her lover's arms and stood erect, indignant and defiant, with flashing eyes, as she demanded:

"Do you call yourselves men to talk in that way?"

The doctor buried his face in his hands, and in a hollow voice said:

"No, Maud, we are not men. We are slaves."

The girl sank into a chair and the two men went out into the night.

Stung to the quick by Maud's reflection of their manhood, they held a whispered conversation.

"But," said Randolph, speaking in a startled tone, "if we are caught, the penalty is death."

"It is only a choice between death on the gallows, or death by starvation," answered the doctor, in desperate earnestness. "I cannot live on the food my wages will furnish. I feel myself growing weaker, mentally and physically, daily. I feel that I am de-

generating into the condition of a man whose sole ambition is to get enough to eat."

"If I die," said Randolph, "who will protect my father and sister?"

"Who protects them now?" said the doctor bitterly. "Suppose any one of the directors chose to have them committed to their care or to the house of industry, can you interfere? Can you protect them?"

"You are right," said Randolph. "The tyranny of the company has become intolerable, and death is preferable to our present condition."

That night they took the oath which united their fortunes with that of the league.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHERE MR. PELON'S MILLIONS WENT.

ABOUT the time that Mr. Holt's business went to wreck, Gen. Daniel Sinclair met with a stroke of fortune which speedily placed him amongst the great capitalists of the city.

He had lived for over fifty years without being specially successful in any branch of business and had not been able to accumulate much money. At this time he was worth twenty-five thousand dollars. He would probably not have had even this much money were it not for the assistance and kindly hints of his friend Cyrus Pelon.

The friendship between Cyrus Pelon and Daniel Sinclair was one of those singularly unaccountable episodes which oftentimes puzzle intelligent men. These two men were the direct opposite in temperament and did not seem to have one idea in common.

Nearly every one who had any dealings with Mr. Sinclair knew him to be a man of very little business morality.

Mr. Pelon seemed to be wilfully blind to this phase of his character as he was to his other shortcomings, and they were many and apparent.

Mr. Pelon was very rich. He was one of those

men who seem to make fortune their servant. He was a widower with one son, his wife having died from pneumonia, and as several of his friends had also died from the same disease about the same time, he became so alarmed for his son's health that he sent him, when he was aged sixteen years, to Heidelberg to be educated, at the same time having in mind the further purpose of avoiding the severe changes of the city climate.

Leon had been in Heidelberg four years when his father was taken sick with the same disease; and, as he lay upon his death bed, he sent for Mr. Sinclair. After the usual greeting, he said: "Dan, if I should die——"

"Nonsense," said Sinclair, "there is no die about you."

"But if I should die, I leave Leon well provided for. I leave all my estate to him, and he will live the life of a gentleman——"

"What's the use of talking of such remote contingencies," said Sinclair. "You will be on your feet directly and as good as any of us."

"That's all right," said Pelon; "but, as I was saying, I will leave him seven millions. I had hoped to make it ten before I died, but by judicious handling, it will reach ten millions in five years."

"Now, Dan, I don't know any one who could manage the estate as well as you, so I have named you sole executor and guardian of the boy."

“I am sure I am flattered,” said Sinclair.

“It is not a matter of compliment, Dan, I well know it is a selfish world, —damned selfish. I selected you because I thought you could do better with the estate than any of my other friends.”

“Still,” said Dan, “that is flattery.”

“Well, it is,” said the sick man.

The next day the disease took an unfavorable turn and two days after Mr. Pelon was dead.

Leon’s grief was in a measure assuaged when Mr. Sinclair notified him in a kindly letter of his father’s death, and that he might draw on the estate to the extent of ten thousand a year.

Leon’s father had not been particularly liberal towards him so far as giving him spending money, and consequently he did not know much about spending, but he readily learned.

He came to Pactolus to attend to some legal formalities, and stopped at Sinclair’s house.

Here he renewed his acquaintance with Millicent Sinclair, the playmate of his school days, now grown to a beautiful and lovable girl, and in the course of his visit they grew to be very fond of each other.

After three months’ sojourn in Sinclair’s home (the happiest of his life) Mr. Sinclair told Leon he must return to Heidelberg. Leon did so reluctantly, but was buoyed up on his departure by the assurance that in a few months he would have the pleasure of

accompanying Mrs. Sinclair and Millicent on a tour through Europe.

On his return to Heidelberg Leon got in with a fast crowd and lived very rapidly.

Millicent and her mother appeared in due season and Leon spent several months travelling with them.

Millicent was a girl who (as the phrase goes) wore well, and before their tour was ended she and Leon were engaged to be married.

Leon wanted to come to Pactolus with Millicent and her mother, but Mr. Sinclair telegraphed a negative.

Leon nominally returned to Heidelberg, but most of his time was spent in Paris and the other capitals of Europe, and thus he acquired a thorough education in the art of spending money.

He always anticipated his income and tried to augment it by gambling, with the usual result.

It is a curious thing that a man with ten to twenty thousand a year can be chronically "hard up," and go about with the hungry look of a tramp and act as if he does not know where his next meal will come from.

Leon soon got into that condition; he had a desperate, wild, and oftentimes weary look. With him it was a deadly struggle to make ends meet. It was almost pathetic to hear him say to his friends, "If my income were only twenty thousand a year or even

fifteen thousand, I would be comfortable, but this eternal scraping and scrimping drives me wild."

He had written to Mr. Sinclair in this strain and Mr. Sinclair had replied tersely: "That he knew a great many young men who lived quite comfortably on a great deal less than ten thousand a year."

Leon frequently borrowed on the strength of his anticipated remittances.

One day there came a letter from Mr. Sinclair's attorney which stated that owing to changes in the financial and industrial markets, the securities in which his father's estate were invested had not been paying dividends for some time, and it was hard to say when he could expect another remittance. The letter wound up by expressing the hope that Leon had been prudent and had saved enough money to tide him over the stringent times.

As a matter of course Leon was astonished to receive such a communication. He could not understand it. He was dreadfully in need of money at that very moment and as the phrase goes: "he was almost wild." He telegraphed to Mr. Sinclair that he must have money and at once, and to realize on securities.

The reply came that there was no market for them.

In a fine frenzy of indignation, Leon sold whatever he had in the way of personal property, jewelry, etc., and sailed for Pactolus.

CHAPTER IX.

LIZZIE.

GENERAL SINCLAIR and Colonel Reed were prominent in the directory of the United Supply Company.

They were men of large wealth. They were highly respected in the only circle then recognized.

They had what is known as grown-up families, and they were both in love or had a passion for the same young woman.

They were in love with the same woman, and she was not specially beautiful, and in the face of the fact that there were numbers of more beautiful women whom either might have loved without competition, their share of the perverse in human nature caused these two men to centre their affections (such as they were) on the same woman.

Lizzie Hester was one of those persons who seem to glide through life without friction. She was what is known as amiable and womanly.

With the audacity of weakness, she cast herself into the arms of fortune and fortune carried her with an amused smile.

She took good fortune as a matter of course. She

was always grateful for little comforts and kindnesses. She treated them as guests expected, but if misfortunes or annoyances (few and seldom though they were) came, she received them with such a pretty, surprised pout that every one felt in duty bound to expel them as intruders.

“Oh, dear, dear, what shall I do?” she would say in the most helpless way. “Won’t you help me?”

Nobody could say why they should help her, and nobody could say why they shouldn’t, and so she got what she wanted and nobody grudged what they gave.

She never did anything in return, because nobody expected it.

If any one found fault with her, she opened her eyes in an amazed, grieved sort of way, and said:

“I didn’t mean to. Please forgive me; there’s a dear.”

“Her manners are simply delightful,” said a friend, and so they were.

They were as sweet and as incapable of analysis as the perfume of a violet.

She was a perfect listener. It was pleased interest which was flatteringly punctuated with questions which were still more flattering, and when occasion permitted a round, full, gushing, merry laugh forced happiness upon every hearer.

“She has a beautiful figure,” said Sinclair, and he was a good judge.

There were thousands of prettier faces to be seen every day, but hers carried with it a certain tender pleading manner which softened the hardest heart.

She was a waif without parents or relative. Her parents died of starvation.

They had the usual food of a laborer in the employ of the company and occasionally a little meat, but this food was not sufficiently nourishing to sustain them in their labor, so they died of consumption—her father first and then her mother followed in a short time.

This couple had been brought up daintily. When they married everything was bright. The father had a good situation, but his employer's business went to pieces under the pressure of the company, and he was thrown out of employment.

He struggled with the energy of despair to get other work, but there were tens of thousands out of work and he was obliged to take a laborer's place to supply his wife and child with the poorest necessities of life. But twelve to fifteen hours of hard work, exposure, insufficient clothing and lack of nutritious food brought him to a pauper's grave in two years.

Lizzie, the poor, helpless orphan, was taken in by Mrs. Newcomb, one of the neighbors, and cared for. Mrs. Newcomb could ill afford it, although she had no children of her own. That is a beautiful characteristic of the poor and unfortunate which causes

them to share their crust and roof with the helpless. So Lizzie did not suffer from want and cold.

When she was seventeen years of age, she was employed in one of the large factories. Here she accidentally met Col. Malden Reed.

He at once took her to his office and very shortly installed her in a pleasant cottage.

She did not object and her friends did not object, because they knew it was idle to object; a director's will was law.

After the colonel had taken Lizzie, Mrs. Newcomb called at his office. She met him as he was going out.

"May I speak to you, sir?" she said.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"It is about Lizzie."

"Well, what of her?" he said, frowning.

"My husband and I would like to see her once in a while."

The colonel made an impatient gesture and was about to speak, but the poor woman, rendered desperate by her love for the girl, went on :

"We have taken care of her for a long time, sir; we have nursed her when she was sick; we have shared our room with her, and the little we have to eat."

"Well?" he said, impatiently.

The woman went on :

"She is a sweet girl, she always was kind and

good; she nursed me when I was ill for months; she worked and kept the house for me; she was the only pleasure we had. We love her."

"Well?"

"I—I wanted to ask you, sir, if you would not let us see her once in a while."

The colonel shook his head.

Mrs. Newcomb clasped her hands and went on with tears in her eyes:

"Only once in a while?"

The colonel shook his head.

"Only once in a while?" she almost wailed.

Still the cruel shaking of the head.

"It isn't much. She is all we have and you are such a great, rich man and have so much."

Still the head shook.

"Please grant us that little favor—once a week?" cried the poor woman.

The colonel shook his head.

"Once a month—only once a month, just to talk to her for a few minutes? We love her—we love her."

The last words were a beseeching cry.

"Now, see here," said the colonel, sharply, "I said No."

The woman threw up her hands as if to ward off a blow.

"What business have you people to talk about love? You had better attend to your work. That

is the kind of nonsense you are thinking about instead of doing your work properly. Every time you go fooling about these personal matters, you rob the company of so much time which they pay you for."

"O sir!" she cried. "It won't interfere with the work. We would see her at night or in the morning."

"She don't want to see you," he said contemptuously.

"She does, oh, I know she does! Please let me try, please, please!"

"She dresses like a lady, looks like a lady, lives like a lady. What will she want with such a creature as you? She is not a fool."

"Please, please, let us see her once more—only once, only once!" And the woman knelt on the floor wringing her hands.

"I say no," he said brutally. "No, No, No!"

Then to himself:

"What am I wasting my time talking to this fool for?" With that he touched a bell twice.

Two uniformed men appeared.

"Take that woman away, and if she makes any fuss, send her to the correction yard for six months."

He then entered an inner office and slammed the door.

One of the men took hold of the woman's arm.

"Will you leave here instantly," he said, "or will we arrest you?"

"No, no," she cried in terror. "I will go, I will go," and she tottered away from the office.

It was true as the colonel had said. Lizzie looked, dressed and lived like a lady. He gave her a most sumptuous establishment.

He did this as a matter of pride and for the sake of holding his own among a number of similar establishments in the city.

The morality of this transaction was not thought of by the colonel or broached by Mrs. Newcomb, for it would have been useless or worse than useless.

In Pactolus it was the custom, as in many despotic countries, for those in power to seize any comely girl to whom they might take a fancy. In Pactolus it was a little more bold and direct than elsewhere.

"Lizzie," said Colonel Reed that evening, "how would you like to go to the opera?"

"Oh, dearly," said she with enthusiasm.

"Well, then, put on your prettiest dress and we will go."

In a short time Lizzie presented herself. She was bewitchingly lovely.

She stood in the doorway.

"Ahem!" she said.

Reed looked up and his face lighted instantly.

He arose and held out his arms. Lizzie tossed her head and hid behind the portière.

She peeped out.

"Come," he said, still holding out his arms.

She freed herself from the folds of the portière, and danced to one side and then to the other, then up to him and away. Then suddenly she rushed right into his arms.

Colonel Reed was proud of his friend as he termed Lizzie and he frequently exhibited her in public places.

Lizzie was a most satisfactory person to take out, as she was always enthusiastically happy over everything she saw. It might be the simplest matter or the most elaborate entertainment, she expressed delight and enjoyment in it, not only in words, but in manner.

She was absolutely without affectation, and never exhibited any signs of ennui, nor was she blasé.

Hers was one of those sunshiny natures which enjoy everything and reflect sunshine.

Her comments on passing matters were always quaint, amusing and original.

Colonel Reed found her as amusing as the entertainment.

After the opera they went to the Razzaro, an exclusive resort for wealthy people.

As they entered Lizzie was criticised by the ladies and habitués of the place.

"Who is that with Colonel Reed?" asked Kate Waldron.

"It must be his new girl," said Captain Wythe. "I hear he is very proud of her."

"Proud of her?" said Fannie Mills, with a sneer. "I cannot see anything to be proud of in such a creature as she is."

"Don't you think she is pretty?" asked Dick Marsh, with a malicious grin.

"Yes—as stupidity is pretty," said Miss Waldron.

At another table attention was called to Lizzie by Tom Morgan.

"Is that Colonel Reed's taste?" said Belle Lewis, with a sneer. "He had better have his eyes attended to."

"Shocking taste in dress," said Sadie French.

"Isn't she rather—that is pretty?" suggested Carleton Watson.

"She would be pretty if she was not so sharp looking," replied Miss Lewis.

Another group at another table condemned with a sweeping condemnation. They condemned her form, her features, and her clothing.

These criticisms were made on the girl, not as an individual, but as an acquisition of Colonel Reed's.

These people commented on her as if she were a picture or a horse.

General Sinclair sauntered in after a few minutes. He bowed to and chatted with several groups in a social way for a few minutes. Seeing Colonel Reed he came forward smiling and shook hands.

"General," said the colonel, "this is Miss Lizzie."

The general bowed and smiled approvingly at the

colonel, and looked at Lizzie with critical admiration.

“Were you at the opera?” asked the general.

“Yes, sir, and I enjoyed it very much, and especially the singing of Mademoiselle Lucia,” said Lizzie.

“How did you like the gondolier’s song?”

Lizzie clasped her hand in an ecstasy of delight, as she cried: “Oh, wasn’t it charming? Wasn’t it, general?”

The general nodded in a pleased way at her enthusiasm.

“I knew you would like it. I knew you would; everybody would.”

Then pointing at the colonel: “Colonel said it was weak.”

“It was weak,” the colonel put in, “and every man will say so.”

“Ladies are better judges of strength than men,” said the general, with a smile.

“Good!” cried Lizzie. “Now, he will have to admit it. Will you, sir?”

“Oh, anything for quiet,” said the colonel, laughing. “Won’t you join us, general?”

“I shall be pleased to if you will excuse me for a minute.” With that he bowed and sauntered to another group.

The colonel was annoyed at the outcome of the dialogue; while, on the other hand, Lizzie was as happy as a bird, and as she gazed around the beau-

tiful room, at its gorgeous decorations and its beautifully dressed occupants (for she contemplated both in the same spirit; she looked at the women not as human beings having human sympathies and affections, but simply as animated objects decorated to please the eye), and as she gazed and sipped her ice, she hummed the gondolier's song in a low, cooing voice.

A child came to the table with a basket of flowers.

"Would the lady like some flowers, sir?" the child said.

"No," said the colonel, in such a gruff tone that both Lizzie and the child started. Just as the child had turned away the general came up.

"Why," he cried, "here are some flowers; we must have some for Miss Lizzie."

He picked out the handsomest bouquet and handed it to her with a smile.

"Oh, thank you ever so much. Oh dear, aren't they sweet!" she gasped after burying her face in the bouquet for several seconds.

"Do you like them?" said the general, laughing.

"Oh! How can you ask such a question? They are perfectly delightful."

Then her face fairly beamed as she looked at the general for a second.

"Now, do you know what I am going to do?"

The general shook his head, smiling.

"Can't you guess?" she said. He again shook his head.

"Then, here goes," she said.

She took a half-blown bud out of the bouquet and going up to the general pinned it to the lapel of his coat.

The general was surprised and blushed as he noted the nodding, nudging, whispering and smiling going on at the other tables. He was pleased as well, however.

The colonel turned white with jealous rage, but he managed to control himself sufficiently to reply with a strained smile when the general asked him if it wasn't pretty.

The bud was a pretty one—as pretty as one could expect to see. Its value was trifling and it seems strange that it should turn the friendship of a lifetime into the bitterest enmity, and yet such was the case.

When Lizzie and the colonel returned to the cottage, she was in the highest good humor, and he was in that morose condition when the appearance of happiness in another is irritating.

The parlor of the cottage was large and occupied the full depth of one side of the house.

The furniture was sumptuous and at the end nearest the back veranda there was a beautiful silk lounge.

The colonel was morose and taciturn, while Lizzie was bubbling over with good nature and spirits.

The colonel threw himself into a large arm-chair. Lizzie, dropping her wrap on a chair, went around the room humming a tune. After a time she began moving about the room in a half-dancing, half-gliding manner, keeping time to the music she was humming.

She took no notice of the colonel, although he, from time to time, glanced angrily at her.

She was a bewitching sight in her low-necked dress as she moved from place to place; sometimes she lifted her dress a little, displaying a prettily-rounded ankle, and again she would raise her arms and wave them direct from the shoulders as if balancing herself as she slowly whirled around from one end of the room to the other.

She looked the embodiment of careless abandon and happiness.

Thrice had this graceful creature gone the length of the room, and each time the face of the colonel had grown blacker. As she passed him the third time he could control himself no longer. His hand closed on the handle of his scorpion-whip. He sprang to his feet and noiselessly creeping up behind Lizzie, brought the lash down on her bare shoulder.

There was a second of dead silence, then the girl uttered a sound that was neither a shriek nor a

moan nor a cry, but partook of the nature of each. It was thrilling in its intensity.

The girl was hurt and surprised. She was shocked and insulted. She had never before been struck. She had always been used to kindness, and even a harsh word jarred on her sensitive nature.

Whether the colonel intended to repeat the blow will never be known; he had no time.

On the instant of uttering the cry, she turned; then, like a flash she hurled herself against the colonel with the whole weight of her body and he went down like a log. His head struck the corner of a settee and he lay there insensible.

Then she sprang at him like a tigress; she fell on her knees and caught him by the throat. He was helpless in her hands and she could have killed him. She took hold of his throat, her eyes fairly blazing. The head made no resistance. She clutched the almost lifeless throat for a moment. Then, with a look of contempt, she pulled her hands off his throat, rubbed them together as if to brush off the contact, and rose to her feet. Her eyes fell on the scorpion. She snatched it up, raised it to strike him. Her hand wavered for a moment, then fell to her side.

“What is the good?” she said with a sob.

She threw the scorpion on his body. Then she put her hands to her head, staggered to the lounge, threw herself full length upon it, and while the blood trickled from the wound on her shoulder she burst

out crying. She cried, she sobbed, she moaned, as only a woman can cry who has been cruelly wounded in her pride by one whom she regards as her protector.

It was a bitter, bitter disappointment, and her faith in the colonel as a friend was utterly dead.

The child, for child she was, was in that condition which is called heart-broken. It was not so much the blow and the pain, although they were severe enough, but the indignity offered to her by one whom she trusted and almost loved. It overwhelmed her and she felt that nothing could ever atone for it. All that he had given her and all that he could ever do for her could not eradicate the feeling of horror and loathing she felt for him after that blow.

There she lay prone on the lounge quivering with her convulsive sobs.

The colonel recovered in a few minutes from his fall. His first impulse was to chastise the girl; he seized his scorpion and strode to the lounge; but as his eye fell on the beautiful prostrate form quivering with emotion, and as he saw the wound and the blood, all of his old love or affection or whatever may have been the feeling with which he had regarded her, stayed his hand. He was subdued; his savage nature stood at bay before the helpless girl. He was afraid to strike. He was cowed. He felt that he had gone too far and that he must make amends.

At that moment he would have done anything she

might have commanded; would have gone to any lengths to propitiate her.

He had been using the scorpion for years, and had seen it used in the most cruel manner upon both sexes.

He had seen delicate women cut in the most cruel manner and had not given the matter a second thought, but here he stood horrified at one blow where he believed it was richly deserved.

He flung the scorpion away.

"Are you hurt, darling?" he said.

Lizzie made no answer.

"Lizzie, Lizzie," he said, in soft tones, "did I hurt you?"

Still no answer from the sobbing girl.

"I didn't mean to strike you so hard," in a whisper.

No answer.

"Come, sit up and say you forgive me."

Lizzie did not seem to hear him.

"I am very sorry I did it. I am a brute."

He might as well have been talking to the lounge, for there was no response.

"Won't you overlook it? I promise it will never occur again."

Still the monotonous sobbing.

"Come, get up, girl, you mustn't lie there all night."

He touched her arm as if to take hold of it. In

an instant she was on her feet confronting him with glaring eyes and upraised arms.

“Hands off!” she cried with voice and manner so menacing that he shrank back cowed.

Then she again threw herself on the lounge.

No sound escaped her now save hard breathing and an occasional moan.

He watched her for some minutes, then he came a step or two nearer.

“Darling, won’t you forgive me?”

He stretched his hands towards her. She seemed to feel his proximity for she shuddered and raising her head and facing him she said in a low tone, but with so much fierce threatening in it that he stepped back quickly.

“Don’t touch me again, or——”

She turned her head away and he sat down in a large chair. His strength seemed all gone; he could hardly move. All he could do was to stare at the recumbent figure on the lounge.

All night long she lay there; all night long he sat there helpless with almost the power of a king at his command and yet he sat there unable to make a weak little girl do his bidding.

Towards morning, from some cause, shock or exhaustion or weariness, he fell into an uneasy sleep.

As day broke he awoke with a start. He looked at the lounge. There was nothing there but some blood stains.

He started up—he looked about the room. Lizzie was not there. He ran to her room. She was not there. He called the servants and they hunted all through the house, but she could not be found—she was gone.

The next time he saw her she was under the protection of General Sinclair. Those men became bitter enemies from that moment.

This girl, by creating this enmity, restored Leon Pelon to at least a portion of his rights.

CHAPTER X.

THE BREADWINNERS' MEETING.

THE Laborers' League which the doctor and Randolph joined was an organization formed for the purpose of trying to protect or better the condition of the people at large. By what means no one could answer, but sheer desperation forced the people to band together for some purpose—perhaps they took comfort in talking over their wrongs—perhaps they hoped to evolve something.

However this may be, the doctor and Randolph attended one of their meetings a short time after Mr. Holt had been sent to prison.

The meetings of the League were held in an old warehouse.

As the doctor and Randolph entered the large hall where the League meetings were held, they were struck with the perfect order which reigned. Not a sound was heard save the voice of a member who was addressing the chair. There was neither listlessness, inattention nor talking.

Here and there members would whisper to one another for a moment in an earnest manner, but at the same time they paid the strictest attention to

what was being said. Several members spoke and their remarks were brief and to the point. They were very temperate in their language and courteous to one another.

The hall was a large square room without any attempt at ornamentation. There was a large platform at one end upon which the chairman sat surrounded by several of the officers of the League. Against the walls there was a line of settees; there were no other seats in the hall. At the end of the hall farthest from the platform there was a large gallery.

About one thousand men were in the room, most of whom were standing. The doctor and Mr. Holt took their positions in the gallery.

The routine business was gone through with very rapidly.

A committee which had been appointed to report as to the advisability of petitioning the directory of the company to do something towards mitigating the sufferings of the laborers, made their report and recommended that a committee of fifteen be appointed who should petition the directory to allow them to present a statement showing the needs of the people.

The report was adopted and a committee appointed. Then there was a break in the proceedings; the chairman conferred with the other officers and everyone began talking on the instant; there was a buzz and hum of voices which at times almost amounted

to a roar. The visitors heard men all around them speaking of the "Spy" committee with great earnestness.

The doctor addressed a man who stood near him asking him what the "Spy" committee was.

The man stared at him.

"Don't you know?" he said.

"This is my first evening here," the doctor replied.

"I beg pardon," said the man, "but the 'Spy' committee is very well known to the members of the League. It reports those members who have betrayed secrets of the League to the company."

"How is it formed?" asked the doctor.

"It is made up of ten of the most careful men in the League; they hear charges against members who are suspected, they investigate them with the utmost care and report at each meeting the names of those they deem guilty."

"What then?" the doctor asked.

"Such members, while under the charge, are cut off from the rest of the community; in fact no one will associate with them; members of the League are afraid to be seen with them."

"Does the suspected member have a trial?" said the doctor.

"Yes, he is given an opportunity to explain or to prove his innocence, but it is only once in a great while that a man against whom a charge is made is acquitted."

"Doesn't that work injustice, sometimes?" asked the doctor.

"I suppose it does, sometimes; but the committee are very careful and never present a man's name if there is a particle of doubt as to his guilt."

"Anyhow," said the man continuing, "there is not much justice in this world, so I suppose it don't make much difference, one way or the other."

The man said this with such an air of weariness that the doctor forbore to question him further. Randolph was interested, and asked what the penalty was.

"I don't know," said the man.

"Don't know?" echoed Holt.

"No, nobody but the board of officers know."

"Is he arrested?" the doctor asked.

"No," replied the man; "three men are assigned to keep him in view; he goes around as usual for a while and attends to his work and lives with his family, but nobody associates with him and after a while he disappears."

"Do you know what becomes of him?"

"I do not; I never knew of a man who had been accused in open meeting being seen after one month."

"But," said Randolph, "can't a man's friends protect or hide him some way?"

"What! from the League?"

The man accompanied this question with a look

which conveyed to the visitors' minds the utter hopelessness of such an attempt.

"But, won't the company protect him?" said the doctor.

"The company?" said the man contemptuously, "What do they care? They get what they want out of the man and then he may shift for himself. Sometimes they don't even give him what they promise. It is every man for himself."

Some one called the man away and the doctor addressed another member.

"What are the duties of the men who are directed to keep in view the man who is accused?" he said.

"Simply to be able to tell where he can be found if wanted," the man replied.

"Can they readily keep trace of him?" asked Randolph.

"Where can he hide?" said the man as he looked inquiringly at Randolph.

Randolph shook his head by way of reply and the man walked away.

The doctor stood still and wondered whether it was better to be a "suspect" or a "vigilante." "In any event," he said to himself, "the 'suspect' has a prospect of release from hopeless toil, hunger and suffering; after all, what does it all amount to?" he said. "Is not death man's best estate?"

In the mean time the voice of one thousand men talking, though generally in a low tone, in volume

amounted to a continuous roar. Suddenly there came a sharp tattoo of the chairman's gavel, and in a moment the roar was smothered and the only sound heard was the shuffling of feet as the men in the assembly changed positions so as to face the chair. Even this sound ceased almost instantly and the hall became absolutely quiet.

Then the chairman spoke in an ordinary tone of voice, but it was heard in every part of the room.

"The meeting will now come to order."

He paused for a moment, and then said:

"We will now hear the report of the 'Spy' committee."

Another pause.

"Have the 'Spy' committee any report?" Pause — "If not we will proceed——"

"Mr. Chairman," the voice came from the corner of the room nearest the platform, and only those in the immediate vicinity could see the speaker.

"Mr. Chairman," the voice repeated when the noise of an involuntary movement of the assembly had subsided, "the 'Spy' committee have a report to make."

The voice was now husky and the speaker cleared his throat.

"The committee report the name of Marshal Wilford."

This was followed by a few seconds of absolute

silence, then there was a movement in every part of the room. Suddenly a voice shrieked out,

“No, no, don’t say it; don’t, it’s a mistake, don’t!”

The voice came from the centre of the room a little to the left.

The doctor and Randolph looked down and saw a man waving his arms and shrieking while the crowd slowly moved and pressed away from him, leaving him alone in the centre of a circle. His eyes were glaring, his arms were outstretched, appealing first to one side, then to the other, and again in front of him.

“Don’t, don’t believe it,” he cried, “it must be some one else——” but the crowd pressed away from him, until he stood alone in a circle about ten feet square.

Then came a sharp tattoo of the chairman’s gavel; there was instant silence; again the inexorable voice spoke in a measured monotonous and cold tone.

“What is the pleasure of the council?”

“I move that the report be accepted;” the voice came from the centre of the hall.

“Do I hear a second,” said the chairman in the same profunctory tone. Several voices called out :

“Second the motion.”

“Does any member, other than the accused, desire to say anything upon the question?” the chairman said this as a mere matter of form, for it was idle to talk upon the report of the “Spy” committee, as the matter was subsequently passed upon.

"If not," he added after a second pause, "we all put the question."

Then came from various parts of the room the cry of "question," "question," "question."

"The council has heard the motion, all in favor of receiving the report will say 'ay.'"

There was a chorus of "ayes" that filled the room.

"Contrary, 'no,'" said the chairman.

"No," came from a dozen voices.

"No," cried the accused, who still stood alone in the centre of the circle; he was pale and trembling and had a desperate, haggard look; as he heard the "no" his courage seemed to revive for he cried out wildly,

"I call for the 'ayes' and 'nays.'"

The chairman brought down the gavel as he said:—

"The 'ayes' and 'nays' have been called for by one member, it is necessary that ten members should demand them; do I hear nine more members demand the 'ayes' and 'nays,'" the chairman paused for a few seconds; there was a dead silence; then in despair the accused cried to his friends one after the other,

"Harry! call! call! Don't let the report go, don't, don't!"

Then turning from side to side he called wildly:—

"Harry, John, Frank! Where are you? Call! call!"

But there was no reply. Down came the chair-

man's gavel, and the accused ceased talking as though transfixed. The chairman looked directly at the accused and said sternly:

"Any member disturbing the order of the meeting will be removed. Do nine more members call for the 'ayes' and 'nays?' If not, I declare the motion carried;" and he paused again and glancing around the room added:

"The 'Spy' committee's report is accepted," and after another pause he said:

"Marshal Wilford is relieved from further responsibility as a member of the League; he will retire."

The accused turned and staggered towards the door, and as he progressed a wide lane was made for him. Three men followed him. The meeting then adjourned.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW TO GET RID OF THE OLD PEOPLE.

THE dinners of the directory were wonders of the culinary art.

It will not seem strange nor a misuse of the word to speak of cooking as an art when we take into consideration the fact that many of the ablest minds in the country were enlisted in that industry.

Men of culture and refinement finding themselves doomed to labor at the most menial toil, and toil which gave but scant return for the effort put forth, were only too glad to become attached to the household of a director, even though they became servants.

A servant's place in the house of a director was a position eagerly sought by the best men in the community. Servants had good clothes, shelter, and the best eating in the world.

The ingenuity displayed by these superior cooks was very pleasing and they produced dishes which were delightful novelties.

Director Conrad Rogers had in his household three cooks, one of whom had in past times been a banker, another had been a successful physician, and a third who had occupied a prominent position as a clerk in a commercial house.

These cooks were each gifted with a talent for a special branch of cooking and Mr. Rogers was proud of their achievements.

There were matters to be discussed in relation to the affairs of the company, and Mr. Rogers invited fifteen prominent directors to dine with him—General Sinclair, George Saunders, Walter J. Watson, Thomas R. Andrew and Clement Howard. Then among the number there were about ten bright ladies in the company who partook of the food and entered into the discussion with as much zest as the men.

There was a winsome odor of flowers in the dining room which was so decorated as to represent a glade in the woods. The floor was covered with a carpet which was almost the exact counterpart of grass. There were trees and shrubs and flowers and rocks with a small cataract half concealed in one corner of the room.

The room was a perfect pastoral scene in lovely spring attire.

Outside a fierce winter storm was beating against the walls and windows of the house.

The dainty food and the pleasing surroundings had a softening effect on these men and women, and they discussed their business with a politeness and a forbearance as well as a consideration for one another's opinions which spoke well for the civilizing effect of well-cooked food and mellow wine.

These diners were trained eaters. They neither ate too much nor drank too much, and they seldom ate what did not agree with them.

They heeded the advice of their cooks. They practically placed their stomachs in their charge and held them responsible for those organs.

The affairs of the company were talked over in a bland manner until Major Andrews said :

“The machinery in carpet mill No. 7867 has broken down a number of times of late.”

This was said while the company were smoking their cigars and sipping their wine.

“What is the cause of that ?” asked Mr. Howard.

“Any mismanagement ?” asked Watson.

“Not that I can observe,” replied Andrews. “The overseer seems to think that portions of it are worn out.”

“Nonsense,” said several of the gentlemen in chorus.

“But I am inclined to think he is right.”

“You must remember that these fellows are always anxious to put the company to expense. They never have the company’s interests at heart ;” said Sinclair.

“That is so,” called out several.

“Nor would I, if I were in their place,” said Mr. Comfort, dryly.

This was followed by a laugh.

“I know that,” replied Andrews ; “but in this

case I made a personal inspection and I found the disabled parts unfit for use."

"Do you mean to say it will be necessary to replace all the machinery?" said Sinclair.

"Well, I suppose it may be patched up here and there in such a way as to carry it along for some years," Andrews replied. "But I think the company will lose more by pottering over the old material in the end than by replacing the machinery entirely."

"I for one am opposed to these heavy expenditures," said Sinclair; "and if the old machinery can be worked at all, I shall vote for repair rather than replacing it."

This speech was followed by a round of applause in which the ladies joined, and so the question was settled.

The ladies of the directory had after a long fight succeeded in having abrogated the rule which banished them from the banquet when the cigars and wine were brought on. Though there were some of the ladies who continued to adhere to the old custom, the majority "stood by the table," as the saying went, until all retired.

"Isn't this nectar," said Major Carleton to Miss Manton Halton, as between puffs of a fragrant cigar he sipped a sparkling wine made especially for the directory.

"Divine," replied Miss Halton, and as she was

about to further express herself, the major in a tone intended for the general assemblage said :

“By the way, there is a problem growing which we will soon have to solve, and, I think, we may as well act on it now as any time.”

He paused, took a sip of his wine, and as he rolled it around in his mouth, he nodded his head at Miss Halton in commendation of the wine. He took a long puff of his cigar. Then he continued his remarks.

“That problem is the old people. I mean those who have grown old and stiff and can’t do as much work as the company ought to get for its money. Well,” he said, after taking another sip of wine, which cost twenty dollars a bottle, and a puff of a cigar which cost half a dollar, “I think we should get rid of these old people who are clogging the channels of trade.”

“How ?” asked Howard.

“Well,” replied the major, again sipping his wine, “there are several ways of getting rid of a nuisance, and the most effective way is to remove it.”

He paused for a moment while he sipped his wine and took a puff of his cigar.

“By the way, general,” he said smacking his lips in a critical manner, “I think this is even a finer Madeira than the last consignment.”

“Come to think of it,” said Sinclair as he gently waved his wine glass in front of his nose, “the bou-

quet is slightly different, and I don't know but that it is better."

Then there was a general discussion on the relative merits of the wine, in which the ladies took part.

After some little time had been consumed in chatter over the excellence of the wine, the major broke in:

"But this is not business. I was talking about the old people—not an agreeable subject," he said, nodding apologetically to the ladies, "but we have got to meet the question some time, and the present is as good as any. Now, I am not what you call a bloodthirsty man, nor am I cruel; but I think in the interest of the company we must get rid of them."

"Do you mean get rid of them for good?" asked Saunders.

"Yes, cut them off entirely so that the company will no longer be burdened with them."

"First rate."

"Good," cried several of the party.

"That would be splendid," exclaimed Miss Winston, and all around the table there ran a volley of exclamation and expressions of satisfaction.

"What is the plan?" cried Mr. Howard.

"Why," said the major as he sipped his wine as though satisfied with himself and all the world, "why, the plan is most simple, direct and practical."

He paused, then added, "We will have to just kill them."

The company were dazed for a moment at the suggestion, then they burst out with protests.

"No, no!"

"Horrible!"

"Inhuman!"

"Cruel!"

"Brutal!"

"No! No!"

"Not to be thought of!"

"Terrible!"

"Awful!"

This burst of energetic protest, coming as it did from the most languid group of voluptuaries in the world, surprised and then amused the major, and he put his hand in front of his face to hide a cynical smile.

"We could not think of such a thing," said Watson.

"It would be barbarous," said several of the ladies.

"Most inhuman," said Mr. Saunders.

"Perfectly horrible," said Miss Layard. And so one after another the guests expressed themselves in unqualified condemnation of the major's suggestion.

The major was not disconcerted and he looked most benevolent, but with a suggestion of a sneer, as he said :

"I have another plan which I think will be more

to your liking. These old people cannot live on what they earn from their labor. They are dying of slow starvation. The food they can purchase with their earnings is not sufficiently nutritious to sustain life and daily many of them sink down exhausted at their labor.

“After a human being is past the age of fifty, the system demands more nutritious food and it also demands a stimulant. These are denied them by their surroundings. These poor wretches drag out a miserable, half-famished existence. I don’t say their stomachs are not filled, for they are, but with food which is not appropriate or sufficiently strength-making for people of their age, and they literally die of starvation. I would suggest that we make an appropriation by means of which laborers over fifty years of age can have what is needful in the way of nourishment.”

There was an uneasy movement and a murmur of disapproval among the guests.

The major did not appear to notice the sentiment of his fellows, but as he went on, his smile was a little more sarcastic.

“Such an act of beneficence would not be much of a tax on our generosity. One cent taken from each thousand dollars of your incomes would do everything for these old people which it is possible from a physical standpoint. What do you think of it, ladies and gentlemen?”

Again the uneasy movement among the guests and an almost audible murmur of disapproval.

The major, with a delicate suggestion of a sneer, added :

“I am willing to do my share. Yes, I will do twice as much as any one of you. Now, what will you do for those who by reason of their age and gray hair we are told to reverence ?”

“I think such things are best left to the overseers,” said Mr. Howard hastily.

“That’s so.”

“Yes.”

“Right.”

“Very proper.”

These responses came quickly and with great energy, but the major was not disconcerted, and he went on as if he had not been interrupted.

“I suppose it is only proper to say in our own justification that neglect for and cruel treatment of the old is not peculiar to our set. In fact, for a great number of years it has been quite common.

“Among the fierce money-getters, from a commercial standpoint, the old man is of no more account than an old horse. Money-getters don’t want old men in their employ. One of the most pathetic sights to a sentimental person is that of an old man seeking work. He meets rebuff after rebuff. ‘Too old.’ ‘Too old,’ is the cry. ‘Too old,’ in the com-

mercial world is very like that which is heard in the Orient from the leper,—‘Unclean!’ ‘unclean!’

“There is one way of looking at this matter,” added the major after a pause, “which should afford us considerable satisfaction, and that is that among savages respect and kindly consideration for old age are the rule, and as we advance in civilization we think less and less of our seniors, while in our refined society the sentiment which promotes respect and consideration for old people seems to have disappeared. The more refined the society the less respect is shown old age. Since we administer death to these old people by cruelly ignoring their rights by insults and rebuff, by heart-breaking negligence, by starvation and cruelty, would it not be kind in us to save them all this humiliation and suffering? Would it not be a mercy to, in some kindly way, relieve them of their load of sorrow and misery, take them from their living death and at the same time relieve ourselves of an expense?”

“It is a dreary thing to find old age, helpless old age, creeping upon you with death from starvation at the end. The most dreaded of all ills to the poor is old age. Old age like a sleuth hound is following us one and all and our only escape is death. Old age or death is the choice.

“Now, how much better is the relief of the latter

than the lingering, cruel suffering without hope of the former ?

“Ladies and gentlemen, the question I would like to have you answer this evening is this :

“Is it your pleasure to kill your worn-out servants by starvation or with a club ?

“If there is any sentiment which enters into this business, starvation is the vehicle. It is very slow but sure. If it is a matter of business, then, on the score of economy, the club is the best relief.”

The major paused for a moment as if waiting for a reply.

As is the way of polite society when anything shocking or annoying or indecent or impolite is said or done, the company simply ignored the major and his propositions, and as he finished speaking each lady and gentleman began talking to one another in the most natural way on topics entirely foreign to that the major had so impolitely thrust upon them.

The major looked disconcerted for a moment (his was a delicate, sensitive nature) and then after taking a swallow of wine, turned to a neighbor and said :

“They don’t seem to like the truth.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE DIRECTORS DID NOT KEEP THEIR APPOINTMENT.

THE chairman of the Laborers' League had shown a wise discrimination in the selection of the committee who were to appeal to the directory for relief.

This committee was composed of fifteen of the best men in the league ; they were men who were endowed with fine mental qualities and many of them had taken degrees in universities or colleges. Three of them had been lawyers, and one chief justice of the Supreme Court ; several of them had been bankers and merchants, and two of them had been physicians, now they were common laborers.

They drafted a petition to the directory asking in the humblest manner to be permitted to make a statement of their grievances to the board. They sent the petition to President Stilpool. After one week they received a reply to the effect that they would be heard before a committee of the board on the Saturday evening following, at nine o'clock, at the board room in the Casino.

The board room in the Casino was a grand salon where the directors met from time to time to transact business.

Saturday, the 26th day of January, was a bitterly cold day. The ground was frozen hard ; there was a fine crust on the snow, just the weather that one could enjoy sleighing.

As night drew on the cold became more intense. The moon rose in her splendor ; people muffled in furs would regard the evening as grand. There was not a breath of air stirring, but the cold was pitiless in its intensity. It seemed to penetrate everything.

At the corner of two of the great thoroughfares of Pactolus there was a building which was magnificent in its massive beauty. Its main entrance was spanned by one grand arch which took in the whole front. The beauty of this entrance was somewhat marred by an ornamental railing running almost flush with the front of the building: This railing was pretty in itself, but dwarfed the beauty of the building and the entrance. Still it was there and served its purpose, that of keeping intruders out of the beautiful archway.

This building was the Casino, in the great hall of which the committee of the board of the directory was to receive the committee of the League.

Long before nine o'clock on this Saturday night, a group of men were standing in front of this beautiful archway. The moon shone full on the front of the building and brought the group and even the features of the men out in strong relief.

They were not prepossessing in appearance, clad

as they were in their unbecoming garments, many of which were well worn and labor-stained and ragged, and yet their long coats gave them a sort of picturesque appearance.

Not the least singular thing about this weird spectacle is the fact that this cadaverous, cold and hungry group were the possessors of more than eight million dollars, all tightly invested in the Great United Supply Company's stock and bonds.

Why were they here hungry and chilled to the bone? Why did they work from twelve to eighteen hours a day at the most exhausting kind of labor?

Simply because the stock of the company paid no dividends, and the bonds paid no interest.

These men were wide-awake business men and when the bottom began to fall out of other securities they invested in the stock and the bonds of the company.

These men had only one thing to reproach themselves for, and that was that they did not get themselves by hook or by crook into the board of directory.

The dividends were passed and interest stopped, and inside of one year hundreds of thousands of people who were independently rich found themselves glad to get the poorest kind of food, clothing and shelter by the most laborious kind of work.

Of course, attempts were made to compel the directory to account for the money they received,

and they did account ; they proved to the satisfaction of the courts :

1st. That the income of the company was enormous.

2d. That the expenses of the company equalled the income almost to a dollar.

3d. That there was nothing to pay dividends or interest with.

This committee was a fair representation of thousands of their countrymen ; they were hungry and cold-looking, and as they stamped their feet and beat their hands to keep their blood in circulation, they presented a strange and comical spectacle. They conversed in low tones through their chattering teeth, and every few minutes they glanced at an illuminated clock on the other side of the square to see how the time moved. Then they would look at the windows of the Casino building to see if it was being lighted. The minutes passed very slowly.

Said one to his neighbor :

“I wonder if they will let us in before nine. I’m afraid we will freeze if they don’t.”

“I hope they do, but I fear that they won’t. It is horribly cold,” replied the one addressed.

“The directory may be late themselves,” said a third.

“No, no, no!” came a chorus of earnest protest.

“No,” said the first speaker ; “they would not keep us waiting on such a night.” Then these men

ran up and down the street, stamping their feet and trying to keep their blood in circulation by exercise. Said one of the group, looking at the clock :

“Five minutes seem as long as an hour.”

But the minutes did pass, and after what seemed an interminable period the clock slowly tolled nine in melodious tones. They were doubly melodious to these shivering men, but still no lights appeared in the windows and no one came to let them into the building.

They looked at one another inquiringly and anxiously ; no one said a word. They saw there was nothing to do but to wait. A great deal depended on their meeting the directory and they did not dare to leave.

The permission to address the directory was a special favor which might not be accorded them again, and they must remain while there was any hope of the directory coming.

And so they remained suffering in the bitter cold.

It certainly was a comical spectacle to see these old men jumping about like marionettes ; it was really funny, and as from time to time gay parties in sleighs dashed past the building, they laughed long and loud at the grotesque spectacle.

Slowly the minutes dragged on until the bell tolled a quarter-past nine. Still no lights appeared neither did any one come to let them into the build-

ing. Not a moment passed without their looking at the clock or up at the building for light.

Every one who approached they expected and hoped to be the janitor. But men came from the north, east, west and south and passed the building by,—many of them doubtless wondering who these men were who stared at them so eagerly.

People came by in wagons and in sleighs and on foot, but no one came to let these poor, half-frozen wretches into the Casino out of the cold that they might speak a few words for the benefit of their fellow-laborers.

Any one who has sat in a comfortable room surrounded by luxuries and waited for a caller or a messenger and has watched the clock under such circumstances and heard its slow, monotonous ticking, and has looked for indications of the expected one's coming only to be disappointed,—has heard footsteps approach and pass, has had this repeated over and over again, has seen the minutes drag on so slowly, until the appointed hour was reached and then, nervous and weary with anxiety and nameless misgivings, at last gives up hope; and if such a one has done so in the midst of the most comfortable surroundings and the pleasantest circumstances, he can readily sympathize with this group of men waiting in the freezing atmosphere in front of the Casino.

Still the minutes dragged on until the bell tolled

half-past nine. The men were desperately cold and bitterly disappointed.

A magnificent sleigh drawn by three black horses shot past the Casino; about a square above it turned and came back. It stopped at the curb in front of the building.

"What is that mob doing there?" came a voice from the sleigh.

No one answered.

"Come here, some of you," again came the voice.

Two or three of the men started forward.

"What are you doing there?" said the occupant of the sleigh, a man buried in furs.

"We were waiting for the Casino to open," said one of the laborers.

"To open for what?" shouted the man in the sleigh.

"We are a committee of laborers who are to meet the directory this evening."

"Oh! yes," said the man in the sleigh; "I know. Was it this evening, are you sure?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I think they have forgotten all about it. I know I had. Well, anyway, they won't meet you to-night. The greater part of the directory are at the opera, and after that they will attend Reed's reception, so you had better scurry away to your homes."

“Haven’t they set another date to meet us, sir?” said one of the laborers in a trembling voice.

“Oh,—er—I don’t know—perhaps—they may, or you can send another of your petitions if they haven’t.”

“Thank you, sir,” the laborer replied.

“By the way,” said the man in the sleigh, “how long have you fellows been waiting on this cold corner?”

“Since before nine o’clock,” replied several of the laborers.

“Since before nine? Why, that is nearly an hour. Oh, ho! ho!” laughed the man, “a good joke.” And at a signal the sleigh shot off, while its occupant was still laughing merrily. The laborers took his advice and scurried to their homes.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW LABORERS CAN AMUSE THE DIRECTORS.

AT Mr. Reed's reception there was a wild burst of laughter from a group of the directory and their lady friends when Tom Drier (for he it was who hailed the laborers from the sleigh) told in a jocular way of the "poor devils" (as he expressed it) dancing in front of the Casino for nearly an hour.

Tom was an humorist and imported into the story many funny details and, as he told it, the story was very funny.

President Stilpool did not participate in the merriment caused by the discomfort and suffering of the laborers. He did not see the humor of it; on the contrary he was very angry; he was no trifler; he was a business man and believed in keeping his appointments and so he looked at the matter from a purely business standpoint.

He did not care for the committee or their sufferings or disappointments, nor did he care how they felt or thought or what they said; he simply recognized the fact that an appointment had been made, not cancelled and not kept. He summarily checked the merriment by calling his secretary.

The secretary appeared before him; he was one of the gilded youths of the day and decidedly arrogant among his associates, and very humble in the presence of the president.

“Why, sir,” said the president sternly, “why was I not notified of the directory’s appointment to meet the laborers this evening?”

The secretary trembled under the president’s eye, as he stammered :

“It was only with the laborers, sir.”

“Well?” said the president, interrogatively.

“I did not think it was of any importance, sir,” muttered the secretary.

“Sir,” said the president, “I will be the judge of what is important in these matters ; now go and arrange for another meeting with these people, and if anything interferes with the directory keeping the appointment, notify them in time ; have you anything further to say ?”

The secretary replied humbly, “No, sir.”

“Then go,” said the president.

The secretary bowed humbly and said “thank you,” and retired hastily.

There were no more broken engagements. The committee were notified on the following Monday that the directory would meet them on Wednesday, at nine P.M.

On Tuesday they were notified that the directory would meet them on Friday at the same hour.

So it came about that a few days after, at a select social gathering of millionaires and their friends, some one spoke of the laborers, and the proposed meeting.

Some of the gilded youth told of humorous adventures which they had had with the laborers.

Director Mayhew told a funny story of how forty or fifty of the laborers were at work loading a ship, and how the tackle broke and how half a dozen of them had been sent dangling over the water, and how they were struggling like monkeys to climb back to a place of safety when Tom Drier cut the rope by which they were suspended and splash, splash, splash they went into the river. One of them landed on a little cake of ice.

“And,” said the narrator, “it was one of the funniest things you ever saw, the way in which he whirled and danced around as he pantomimed to the laborers to help him.”

“Was he saved?” asked pretty Nellie Lee.

“I don’t know,” said Mayhew, “but we did have great fun fishing the others out; we would throw a line to one of them; pull him almost to the dock and then slacken up and let him drift, then pull him in again. I tell you it was the best fishing I ever had.”

“Oh, what fun!” cried several of the girls in chorus.

“Did the laborers get wet?” asked Dick Taylor.

“I suppose they did”—then with a smile of pleased recollection, he added, “what am I thinking

about ; of course they were wet, dripping, with the water pouring out of their clothes in streams."

"Was it cold?" asked Minnie Haynes.

"Cold! I guess it was."

"What did you do with them?" asked Frank Davis.

"Oh, we stood them up on the dock in a line, one after another, as we pulled them out. You should have seen them shake and the way their teeth did chatter. It was so funny that Carleton rolled over on the dock laughing."

"What became of them?" asked Nellie.

"We made it all right with them ; we told the overseer to give them a day off to get dried out—but," he added laughing, "I almost forgot one of the funniest things of all. When the overseer told them they could go home they started off and two of them were frozen together."

This brought out another laugh.

"I was with Merley," said Charley Suffin, "riding to dinner at Glenridge one day last week, and Merley saw a laborer dodge behind some underbrush. 'Now,' says he, 'there's a fugitive, let's chase him !' With that he gave a whoop and over the fence he went into the field. I followed.

"The fugitive heard the whoop and ran for the woods, and we after him.

"The brush was rather heavy, so we had to go slowly. He was a good runner and he led us a

good chase—but we were in for fun so we did not mind. Sometimes we gained on him ; sometimes he gained on us.”

“Why didn’t you shoot him ?” asked Mayhew.

“Why, that would have spoiled the fun ; we were having a hunt. Well, we kept up the chase for nearly half an hour, when we came upon him suddenly hiding behind a tree. Would you believe it, the fellow had the impudence to show fight. He had a club and called out ‘keep off.’”

“What did you do ?” asked Miss Haynes.

“Why, we simply rode him down and left him there.”

“What became of him ?” asked Nellie.

“I don’t know ; it was getting late and only by hard riding we got to Glenridge in time for dinner. We were only five minutes late.”

Several other gentlemen related similar experiences, to the great delight of the company.

After a pause, Lulu Wright burst out :

“Oh, Mr. Mayhew, are the laborers such terrible creatures ?”

“Well,” said Mayhew reflectively, “they are pretty bad.”

“O dear me,” said Lulu in pretty fright, “do they bite ?”

“They would like to,” replied Mayhew, “but their teeth are drawn—or rather their pockets are empty, which is the same thing.”

“Isn’t it nice,” said Lulu, “to have them so submissive. I should think they would kill their overseers and every one who treated them badly.”

“They would kill every overseer and every director if they got the chance—and they could get the chance if they would only unite, sink self and make common cause against their rulers. Yes, they could be free men in twenty-four hours.”

“By George,” said Frank Davis, looking around cautiously, “what you say may be heard by the laborers and they may take the hint, and——”

“Revolt,” said Mayhew, finishing the sentence; “my dear boy, you have nothing to fear; no one here is going to repeat my remarks to the laborers, and if they did it wouldn’t make any difference, for the laborers couldn’t sink self and couldn’t make common cause against their masters.”

“Why?” asked Davis.

“Because if it were not for the selfishness of the oppressed there could be no oppressors. Here is a whole nation of millions of people submitting tamely to the most galling tyranny—for this is the finest despotism that has ever existed—at the hands of twenty-five hundred people, simply because each slave says to himself, ‘If I should join in a revolt I may suffer. I will not endanger my precious skin. I will wait for some one else to take the risk; everyone for himself.’ There is your safety, gentlemen. This same selfishness or cowardice affords us more

protection than an army of one million men, and we never need fear a revolt until these brutes are willing to forget self and work honestly for their fellow-men.

“Many despotisms heretofore have failed because they were not thorough enough, and because they allowed people to have money and property with which to support anarchists who seek to destroy despotism tyranny.

“Here lies the strength of the oligarchy ; it keeps the masses dependent for each day’s food on each day’s labor. The moment you relax that rule you are in the position of a sailor who cuts a hole in the bottom of his ship.

“See to it that the masses have to work all the time to keep themselves from starving, and they will have no time to plot mischief or anarchy.”

“Are they really going to let those terrible creatures into the Casino on Friday ?” asked Miss Lee.

“Yes,” said Mayhew; “I don’t see the use of it, but the president wants to hear their views, so they will be there”—then with a yawn, “it may be amusing.”

“Dear me,” said Minnie, “I should like to see them; can’t we ladies go to the Casino on Friday ?”

“Oh, that would be delightful,” said Miss Lee; “can’t we go ?” she said coaxingly to Mayhew, “say yes, that’s a good fellow.”

Mayhew hesitated for a moment, then said, “I

don't see any objections. We will make up a party and go."

"Good," cried the girls.

Then a number of pleasant parties were made up of the fairest ladies and the bravest gallants in the city, and the appearance of the committee of laborers before the directory bade fair to be one of the fashionable events of the season.

CHAPTER XIV.

BEFORE THE DIRECTORY.

FRIDAY, the 10th day of February, was another savagely cold day, and as the sun went down it became still more cold. But the weather did not interfere with the comfort and pleasures of the directory.

The Casino was brilliantly illuminated.

The meeting room of the directory was one beautifully adapted for the purpose to which it was to be devoted this evening.

Indeed, it was oftentimes used for trial of questions and disputes in relation to the affairs of the company and also in settling disputes of its members.

The room was a perfect oval. At one end was a low platform upon which was a long table or desk almost crescent-shaped, the horns pointing outward. Behind this was an elaborately-carved sounding board.

This desk or table was for the use of the president and the inquiry committee appointed by the directory to meet the laborers.

Around the room were a series of small boxes or balconies, each capable of holding from twenty to one

hundred people. Pendent from these balconies were hangings of different colored silks. The walls or rather the general tone of the walls was a rich golden brown boldly frescoed in kindred tints.

The lofty ceiling was dome-shape and of stained glass. The floor was of polished wood, destitute of seats save a row of highly-ornamented settees fixed to the wall.

At half-past eight the directors and their friends began to arrive.

The jingle of sleigh bells rang out merrily on the cold night air as sleigh after sleigh dashed up to the entrance and deposited its occupants at the entrance of the Casino.

As the balconies filled up they looked like bouquets of vari-colored flowers hanging from the walls. The fluttering fans, the signaling and recognizing friends from box to box made a most enlivening spectacle.

The committee of the League had learned by bitter experience that it was not wise to be too early, and they arrived at the Casino three minutes before nine o'clock. They were met by the janitor and without ceremony ushered on to the main floor of the board room.

Coming as they did out of the dark, cold street into the warm, brightly-lighted, brilliantly-decorated hall, it was no wonder that they were dazzled and that they even staggered with surprise at the gorgeous scene into which they were ushered.

“Here they are!” “Here they are!” came from the balconies as their occupants craned their necks to get a better view of this group of cold, miserable and hunger-famished wretches who were blinking and cowering before this extravagant display of luxury.

It was a most wonderful contrast of opulence and poverty.

The committee, every one of whom had been rich at one time, fairly cowered before the splendor of the scene and they huddled together like sheep. They were overcome by their emotions and many of them buried their faces in their toil-worn hands while the tears trickled through their fingers.

When the guests witnessed this scene, they whispered, “It is getting interesting already.”

A silver gong sounded and a liveried usher opened a door to the right of the directors’ desk and the president entered and took his seat; then a door was opened on the opposite side and the inquiry committee of the directory, ten in number, entered and took seats, five on the right and five on the left of the president.

The clerks and secretaries then entered and sat at tables to right and left of the sounding board.

The president tapped a square of marble with his gavel and said, “The secretary will read the order of exercises.”

The secretary read the order of exercises in a mag-

nificent baritone voice which filled the room with melodious tones.

“Is there any other business before the committee?” asked the president.

The secretary then read the petition of the League committee and the reply of the directory.

“Are the committee of laborers here?” said the president. “The secretary will call them.”

The secretary then called out, “If there be any persons here who desire to speak to this committee of the directory, they will now present themselves.”

Then the chairman of the League committee arose and moved to the centre of the room, followed by the other members of the committee; there were fifteen in all.

It was a singularly incongruous group and was almost picturesque as it stood in a sort of rough semicircle before the committee.

The president broke the silence. He said :

“Is this the committee from the laborers?”

The chairman, Adrian Shands, formerly chief justice of the Supreme Court, stepped a little forward, and in a husky voice, scarcely audible, replied : “It is.”

CHAPTER XV.

PRO AND CON.

“PROCEED,” said the president.

In a voice trembling and agitated, the chairman said,

“In presenting our petition to your honorable body, we would say that as near as we can ascertain we voice the sentiments of one million people within a radius of ten miles and probably forty millions in the entire country.

“It lends strong emphasis to our appeal when we think that the population of the country has been reduced fifteen millions since the company has taken possession of the industries of this fair land, and the population in this vicinity has been reduced five hundred thousand.

“There are a great many reasons for this, and among them I will name three—

“First, there has been a vast emigration to foreign countries. People have voluntarily exiled themselves.

“Second, that great changes in the method of living have wrought a reduction of the population.

“Third, the people not being used to the extreme

labor and the necessary privation incident to changed times, succumb to its effects by the thousands.

“This, your excellencies, is the cold way putting these facts.

“But we must remember that mankind is tenacious of life; that life is sweet; that man hates to part with and will resist every effort of man or disease to take it from him, and yet death has been our constant guest.

“Dying, your excellencies, is an individual act and when untimely it is generally a cruel, slow process.

“How, then, is this reduction of the population brought about; what are its ministers and mediums?

“Overwork, lack of food, insufficient clothing, bad air in tenements, want of treatment and care in sickness.

“These elements have made the workmen of to-day gaunt, hunger-haunted wretches who never know what a day's comfort is and whose life is spent in a bitter struggle to get enough to eat.

“A single man can earn only sufficient to supply his absolute wants, and if he marries his wife must do her share in keeping want from his hearthstone.

“Where we have families, every member must contribute its aid if there is to be any comfort in the household, and with our best efforts we can scarce more than supply our most urgent needs.

“In winter we suffer from cold; in summer from heat.

“I am past my sixtieth year and have to work fourteen hours a day, walk three miles to my work in the morning and three miles to my home at night.

“I have never learned a trade and am at work as a common laborer. I have to move and carry heavy boxes and barrels, to load them on trucks and to carry them up and down stairs.

“I must keep up with younger men or I will be put on a lower grade of labor and earn less wages.

“If I am slow or attempt to rest the overseer brings his scorpion about my shoulder and I am stung into activity.

“My wife died two years ago exhausted by work she was not used to. I had four daughters and three sons. I have now one son and two daughters.

“My youngest daughter died ten days ago ; she worked faithfully and hard as long as her strength lasted. Then she came home with a raging fever. We stayed up with her by turns and my other daughter was obliged to remain from work to watch her, we could ill afford the loss of time, but in spite of all our efforts she died.”

Here the old man bowed his head in his hands and there was a buzz of whispering in the balcony.

There was a pause of a few moments, then the old man raised his head and glanced sidewise at the whispering people in the balconies and then at the president.

The president's gavel came down and the whispering ceased.

The old man resumed in a broken voice.

"If your excellencies please, when I give a statement of the condition of my own family, with a few exceptions it applies to nearly all the families of the laboring class.

"They are more or less intelligent and display different degrees of judgment in the management of their households and the use they make of their wages. Some are always at the starvation point, while the most thrifty and economical can save nothing but a few dollars and that only by a self-denial which is almost cruel.

"In Pactolus and vicinity there are now about one million people. Of these there are only about ten thousand who are not wholly dependent on the company for sustenance. Some have little stores or business of trifling importance by which they manage to live ; some have managed to keep money in quantities sufficient to live.

"Two thousand resident directors enjoy three-fifths of the entire income of the country's produce. Ninety-five per cent of the inhabitants are employees of the company.

"Three-fifths of these latter are unskilled laborers and they in a large measure are made up of those who in former times were employed as clerks, book-

keepers, professional men, merchants, manufacturers, bankers, brokers and agents.

“This class we commend to the special attention of the directory for the reason that when the change came and when their business was absorbed by the company and they could find no field of employment in their chosen occupation and not having knowledge of any trade or craft, they were obliged to work as laborers and associate and herd (for you cannot call it living) with the most ignorant and brutal of mankind.

“Most of the people to whom I refer, even the clerks and book-keepers, are educated and have been brought up amidst refined surroundings. In the past they have enjoyed many comforts. Many of their children have also (before these cruel times came upon us) been delicately reared.

“Now, when we think of what has been their condition, living comfortably with refined and elevating surroundings, and what their condition is now, laboring at work which is beyond their strength, competing with men whose sole power lies in their physical strength and who have no sympathy with any of the higher aims of life; that they are obliged to live in crowded tenements, that they are obliged to associate with those who are their inferiors in every way, the lot of these men is a sad one. And, when you add to this the element of privation which enters into almost every household, the cup of misery overflows.

“But what will I say of that other class, those who have not been clerks or book-keepers or employees, but were themselves men who in better days employed in some cases thousands of people—men who a few years ago were the possessors of from fifty thousand dollars to over a million, and who lived in palaces; men who with their families enjoyed all the luxuries that money could buy? Think of such men as these living with their families in a wretched tenement and working fourteen hours a day for just enough wages to supply their scantiest wants. I appeal to your excellency, is the change not a terrible one?

“Then there is that great middle class, people, both men and women, who were possessed of property to the amounts of from five thousand to fifty thousand dollars. There are tens of thousands of these and they likewise suffer and die from overwork—work to which they are unaccustomed, poor food, poor clothing and poor habitation.

“The way in which the vitality oozed out of business and property is unprecedented. One by one the industries of this city seemed to lose their money-making power and even the power to support their owners, and accumulated wealth slipped through men’s fingers as if it were dry sand.

“In this committee (all of whom are day laborers) we have five men who a few years ago were worth one hundred thousand dollars each; three who were

worth from ten thousand to fifty thousand dollars each, and two who were worth nearly a million each.

“I personally hold five hundred thousand dollars of the stock of your great company, but I have not received a cent in dividends or interest for three years.”

There was a cynical smile on the faces of more than one of the directors at this statement, for it was an open secret that the speaker while on the bench had rendered a series of decisions which were strange to law, but manifestly favorable to the company and he had shortly thereafter become a heavy stockholder in the company.

The old man raised his voice as he said :

“It is a bitterly singular fact that there are thousands of people who are the possessors of hundreds of thousands of this company’s stock who work as common laborers and mechanics for a bare subsistence and do not receive a dollar in the shape of either interest or dividends for all the money invested by them.

“It would seem that the company had fallen into the hands——”

The president’s gavel came down with a crash and the speaker paused aghast.

The president spoke :—

“The company’s action is not to be criticised.”

“I beg the pardon of your excellencies,” said the

ex-justice. "I—I—was excited and was careless. I hope you will pardon me."

"If you have anything further to say we will hear you."

It took the old man some time to recover his voice ; then he resumed :

"If your excellencies please, I fear that I have already trespassed too much on your valuable time, but before closing, I would like to say that if you would take the pains to investigate you would see that it is impossible for workmen to live on the wages they receive. I mean, not with any comfort, as a man or woman should live who have any desire above those of the lower animals."

The chair interrupted the speaker by tapping the desk with the gavel.

"Do we understand," said the chair, "that you wish the company to raise the wages of all the workmen equally ?"

The speaker hastened to reply :

"Oh, no, your excellencies, all we ask is that the workmen be graded and that the more intelligent men receive larger pay."

Then the president, in a clear, cold voice, said :

"The directory has consented to hear your appeal, not because it felt that you had any right to take up its time with such matters (for all relations between the company and its employees are matters of contract into which neither party is in any

way bound to enter or remain), nor because it is its province to right wrongs—for the company is not a benevolent institution, nor because it feared anything which the workmen might do in the way of retaliation for imaginary grievances.

“For the company can take care of itself. But they meet you for the purpose of pointing out certain errors which have found lodgment in workmen’s minds as to the relations and duties of the company to its employees.

“It may as well be understood first as last that the company is in existence to make money and to use men, materials and elements for that purpose, and the company has no desire to be regarded in any other light.

“Now, the first thing I want to consider is the present and past times and their relations to men and women.

“I am of the opinion that when you say that the times were much better for men before the company assumed the control of the products and industries of the country, you are in error ; if my recollection serves me right, there was much dissatisfaction in those times. Society was by no means perfect. There were eternal complaints of bad government. There were wrongs perpetrated on individuals and communities.

“There is one statement of your case which has weight—that the workmen cannot perform their

allotted duties and tasks on the food which the wages will furnish them.

“That is a matter which concerns the earning capacity of the company, and competent commissioners will be appointed to make experiments, apply tests and any changes they may recommend will be made.

“Aside from that I do not know that you say anything that is new or of practical value.

“You talk of suffering ; there has always been suffering. You talk of want ; there always has been want. You talk of injustice ; there has always been injustice.

“You talk of selfishness ; there always has been selfishness. You talk of hard work ; there has always been hard work. You talk of unrequited toil ; toil has never yet received its due.

“You talk of the rich grinding the face of the poor ; when has it been otherwise ?

“You talk of poverty ; when was mankind free from poverty ?

“You have not spoken of intemperance or crime nor of morality.

“For if you had, you would have said that there never has been less crime or intemperance or a better moral condition.

“The newspapers of past times contained an almost daily fusillade of charges of corruption and fraud against all branches of the government—national and municipal.

“Every law passed was regarded with suspicion if it had anything to do with business or money.

“Every act of the executive was scrutinized, every contract or franchise which was awarded by local authorities was said to be discharged with dishonesty.

“This may have all been vapor, but there were two facts which lent vitality and substance to all these charges.

“Influence was required to secure legislation in every instance, and public works cost in many instances three times as much as the same work could be done for private parties.

“Either the public purse was being constantly looted or libel and slander was rampant.

“The administration of the law was said to be unjust and inequitable.

“The law is always merciful to the rich. It was more so then than now.

“That justice was bought and sold was an open charge.

“The law was a great net which firmly held the little offenders while the great malefactors tore their way through its meshes.

“Great enterprises were carried through, by means of which groups of rich men were further enriched by property taken from their fellows. Oftentimes the court, when appealed to for protection, stretched its conscience to the limits and beyond the limit of

judicial integrity in giving judicial sanction to what was to all intents and purpose conspiracy and robbery.

“Less harsh terms were used, but the result was the same: one man had another man’s property and had acquired it without consideration.

“The variety of forms which this method of acquiring property assumed was only limited by the ingenuity of the men who profited.

“If the wrong-doer was rich, the law seemed powerless to punish.

“In business, the word ‘honor’ seemed to have been obsolete. The more unscrupulous the merchant, the greater the measure of his success.

“Business was conducted on lines which excluded conscience from the market and the exchange. Honesty and truth could not compete with untruth and dishonesty.

“If then we had the patience and time we could compare the state of society before the creation of the company with society of to-day and feel well satisfied that we have advanced.

“What was the society of the past for which you so sincerely mourn?

“Tear off its gaudy mask and what was beneath? Selfishness, greed, hypocrisy, brutality and oppression.

“There were times and places where certain phases of society contained elements which were good and

beautiful and beneficial to men, but this was the exception; from the highest society, where none but the so-called noble entered, to that of the ordinary classes, whose passport was but a decent suit of clothes, selfishness, insincerity, and cruelty seemed to rule. Society always welcomed people whose titles or money were procured by means which were contrary to the laws by which society was governed, even though such people openly violated the moral codes established by society.

“Is it any wonder then that men and women, particularly in what was known as the first society, spent their time in trying to outdo one another in the splendor and extravagance of their displays at their social gatherings and that, with wolfish instinct, they pursued even to death any one who was unfortunate.

“If a man or woman made a misstep, society swiftly scanned his or her surroundings; if such were independent and rich or in a position to defy society, society looked the other way and if it spoke at all spoke in whispers of ‘errors’ or ‘eccentricities.’ even though the trespasser had been guilty time and again.

“If the trespasser happened to be poor or without influence, then society opened the flood-gates of its wrath and its myriad-voiced denunciation became thunderous in its pitiless rebukes; and oftentimes truth was lost sight of in the clamor.

“Society had rigid moral laws, but they were not for the rich. These laws were practically ignored by some, while others were amenable to their slightest infraction.

“Everywhere from the court to the cot of the peasants was felt the oppression which money placed upon man and his liberties.

“The people in those days were no better off from a physical standpoint than they are to-day. The vast mass of mankind had only the barest necessities; with an awful uncertainty haunting them from day to day, they never knew when their means of livelihood would fail. At all times there was a vast number who could not get work, for whom there was no work—how they lived God only knows—but from this class the lesser criminals—those criminals who were punished for their crimes—were recruited. How many of the men who have acquired large amounts of wealth were more honest than these? How many of them were not morally more deserving of prison than the slum-bred criminal?

“The criminal of the slums went to prison, while the criminal of the palace defied the law.

“It was a common complaint in those days that the law barred the rich criminal out of prison and barred the poor criminal in, and that too under the same law; but there was always more than one way of looking at a law, and an ingenious way which courts had of ‘distinguishing’ their former decisions

and rulings was very comforting to malefactors whose 'operations' were large.

"I have taken pains to say what I have said in order to show you that when you regret the times that are past and speak of them as being exceptionally good and pleasant, you were mistaken. Those times were no better for the people as a whole than are the present times.

"The governments of those times did not manage the affairs of the nation better than the company does now.

"There was steady cause of complaint against every department at all times ; wrongs and injustice to individuals and communities were continuous and unremitting ; men's liberties and what are known as human rights were not respected any more than they are now.

"The ideal government was good, but it was not lived up to in practical life.

"You ask the company to change its policy in regard to the wages of its laborers and to give certain classes of workmen more than others.

"In this you show the old spirit of selfishness and self-seeking which was the bane of society in the past.

"Certain of your people desire to be a little better than their neighbors at the expense of their fellows.

"This the company will not allow. There will be but one grade of employees ; whether they be clerks,

book-keepers, mechanics or unskilled laborers, they will be known as laborers and they will receive equal pay according to the age schedule.

“There are a great many reasons for this, the principal one of which is that in personal rivalry and competition the laborers’ attention would be diverted from their work and the discipline would be impaired.”

The president paused for a moment and then added, “Is there anything else you wish to say?”

The ex-judge shook his head in a hopeless way as he answered, “Nothing.”

The president nodded to the secretary.

“The laborers will retire,” said the secretary.

The committee looked sadly and longingly around the room, at its splendor, at the balconies and their occupants, at the rich hangings, at the splendid apparel and the magnificent jewelry, and all the evidences of wealth and comfort.

Then with a shudder they gathered their worn garments about them and went out into the darkness and cold.

The directors vacated the daïs.

An orchestra took possession of it ; then there was a burst of melody.

The occupants of the balconies descended to the floor, and the remainder of the night was passed in dancing, feasting and gayety.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHERE ARE THE TEN MILLIONS ?

LEON PELON was not practical ; he had never worked or attended to business, nor had he ever had any idea of business. Notwithstanding this, when he arrived in Pactolus, he was struck with the change which had taken place in the city during the few years of his absence.

As he rode from the steamer to his hotel, he noticed the streets had a neglected appearance. In a number of them he noticed that grass was growing in crevices of the pavement ; in the gutters and on each side of the roadway. He noticed that great numbers of the buildings were closed and barred up, and in the corners of the doorways heaps of dust had accumulated.

Wherever iron was exposed it showed signs of rust and neglect. Even on the main street and the other great thoroughfares, he saw whole rows of buildings which evidently were used only for the storage of goods.

The houses were numbered with great figures in white on black backgrounds ; there were also great buildings which were marked according to the busi-

ness carried on in them, thus : "Cotton Mill, No. 300," or "Woolen Mill, No. 500," or "Clothing Factory, No. 200," then beneath each of these were the letters "U. S. Co." No individual name appeared on any of the buildings.

One feature struck Leon with peculiar force · there appeared to be no wholesale or retail stores.

Immediately after reaching his hotel Leon started out to see his guardian. He went to the house where Mr. Sinclair resided. The house was greatly improved. He rang the bell ; a servant opened the door and to Leon's question replied that Mr. Sinclair was not at home.

"Is Mrs. Sinclair in ?" he asked.

"No," the servant replied, "she is at Glenford."

"And is Miss Sinclair in ?"

"No," said the girl, "she is with her mother."

"Where will I find Mr. Sinclair ?" asked Leon.

"He is at the office of the company."

"What company ?"

The servant stared at him and replied :

"The United Supply Company."

Leon turned away in disgust saying to himself :

"This servant is intolerably stupid."

The servant looked after Leon and said to herself, "That young man doesn't seem to know anything."

Leon turned to the cab driver and said : "Do you know where the office of the United Supply Company is ?"

The man stared for a second and replied : " Yes, sir." Then to himself he said, " I wonder if he takes me for a fool, as if everybody don't know where the office of the company is."

Leon got into the hack feeling very much mystified and was driven to the door of a large building.

On his inquiring for Mr. Sinclair, he was referred to a gentleman who said he was Mr. Sinclair's secretary and would attend to any business relating to that gentleman's affairs.

Leon said : " I wish to see him personally," and handed the secretary his card.

The secretary told him to take a seat and sent the card to an inner room.

After waiting for more than an hour, word was brought to him that Mr. Sinclair would see him.

He found his guardian in a gorgeously-appointed office, looking somewhat older than when he had last met him.

Mr. Sinclair's manner was very cold and after the first greeting and inquiries to which Mr. Sinclair replied very briefly. He was especially cold and formal in his replies to inquiries made by Leon as to his wife and daughter. There was an embarrassing pause ; then Sinclair said in rather an uncomfortable way, " I am afraid that your father's estate is in a very bad way ; in fact, to be brief, it is bankrupt."

“Why, how is that?” faltered Leon, “I thought my father left a great deal of property.”

“Well, so he did,” said Sinclair, “but it is invested in unproductive real estate and don’t bring any income; then a great deal was invested in stock companies which have been absorbed by the company or frozen out of business; in fact, the estate is indebted to me to the amount of several thousand dollars.”

Leon was dumb. He stared stupidly at Mr. Sinclair as though he were in a dream. He grew hot and cold and at times felt as if he were floating in space; his mind went back to Heidelberg and Paris; he thought of the way he had squandered money, and it made him dizzy. Now he thought he could live on less than ten thousand a year, but it was too late. Then he thought of Millicent and their engagement and a warm wave of hope came over him.

Poverty to him was something horrible to contemplate; he did not see how he could endure it, suffering or want he had never known, but he had oftentimes seen those who were afflicted in that way and he had shuddered as he thought of even the remote possibility of his being in such a condition.

As he thought of Millicent his hope rallied and he felt that his affairs were not in such a bad condition as appeared at first.

All of these thoughts rushed through his mind in a few seconds, but the last thought cheered him only

for a moment. He was chilled to the heart as Mr. Sinclair repeated in a hard and cold voice, "Yes, the estate is indebted to me in several thousand dollars," and then added, "have you the money to pay me?"

Poor Leon stared at him in a dazed way for a moment, then answered mechanically, "Not now."

The tone and manner of Sinclair in making this last remark was such as to kill all hope which Leon had entertained. He arose to go and Sinclair did not detain him; he did not invite him to call at his office again nor to visit him at his home.

Leon followed the servant or attendant through the several apartments and out into the street. He got into the cab and said to the driver in a hoarse voice, "back to the hotel."

Arrived at the hotel he went to his room and ordered a bottle of brandy. He drank glass after glass until he fell in a drunken sleep on the bed.

He did not leave his room for three days. This gave him an opportunity to get thoroughly drunk and passably sober.

He then thought to himself that something was wrong. He couldn't understand why the vast estate which his father had left to him could have been dissipated in so short a time.

After debating the matter back and forth for some time he said, "I will consult a lawyer—but what lawyer?"

He squeezed his aching head between his hands

and thought and thought and as a result of his thinking the name of a lawyer came to his mind. Lapsley was the name ; years before he had seen him at his father's house at some festivities and the lawyer had spoken to him in a kindly way and told him that whenever he needed counsel to come to him. This he knew was said in the way of banter, but he concluded that he would see him and ascertain at all events why he was penniless.

He went down to the office of the hotel and made inquiries for the whereabouts of Lapsley.

After a long search through some old directories, he learned that he was located in one of the downtown streets.

Calling at the office mentioned in the directory, he was informed by the janitor of the building that Mr. Lapsley had given up the practice of law and was working in one of the company's shoe factories.

Further inquiry of this janitor developed the fact that in the whole city of Pactolus there were not more than thirty lawyers. Most of them, the janitor told him, were about to give up their profession because there was little or no litigation, except such as was carried on in the interest of the company.

Still he was determined to have legal advice, so hap-hazard he called on a lawyer by the name of John Rusk.

Mr. Rusk was a middle aged man rather stoutly built. Leon told him of his father's death, of his

living at Heidelberg, of Sinclair's guardianship and of his interview with his guardian and when he was through Mr. Rusk said: "It may be all right or it may appear to be, which will amount to the same thing."

"What do you mean?" said Leon.

"I mean that if the accounts were kept correct and ordinary shrewdness exercised in the transferring of the estate to your guardian, I don't think he will have much trouble in keeping it."

"Why should that be?" said Leon.

"Well," replied Mr. Rusk, "the executor could at any time within the past two years have so invested the estate that it would become moneyless in a year."

"How do you mean?" asked Leon.

"By investing in securities whose values ooze out shortly after the money is put into them. This has been done in real estate investments and all that can be charged against the executor is that his judgment was bad. Of course, I mean, bad for the estate."

"Now, for the last few years circumstances have very much favored that sort of—wisdom—I had almost said rascality, but that term don't apply to rich people. Now, you see, there is little or no practice of law; the courts are controlled by what is known as influence. The cases are not decided on their merits. Then values have shrunk so that there is to-day nothing of any value except a seat in the

board of the directory of the United Supply Company. However, Mr. Pelon, if you will stop in tomorrow afternoon, I will in the mean time see what can be done."

Leon departed.

Next day at three o'clock he appeared in the lawyer's office. Mr. Rusk shook hands with him in a sympathetic way as he said: "I am sorry, but I can't do anything for you, my boy. I am afraid your case is hopeless."

Mr. Rusk had spoken to Mr. Sinclair's secretary and the secretary gave him a meaning look as he said: "You may by some remote contingency induce Mr. Sinclair to allow a suit to be brought against him, but it is hardly possible. If you undertake the case and win you will be ruined, and if you lose you will be ruined."

"But," said the lawyer, "it is pretty hard on the young fellow, he ought to have justice."

"So he ought," said the secretary, "so ought thousands of others, but I am not the kind of reformer who try to mend buzz saws when they are in motion. There is but one safe rule in this world and that is, 'every man for himself.' If you are wise, Mr. Rusk, you will not attempt to fool with the buzz saw."

Mr. Rusk took the hint.

Leon left Mr. Rusk's office more bewildered than ever. As a matter of course he was not satisfied with Mr. Rusk's disposition of the case and he went

to another lawyer. He related the facts to him and the lawyer said in a sharp voice, "What do you say was the name of the executor and your guardian?"

"Daniel Sinclair," said Leon.

"What, the director?" cried the lawyer aghast.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I can do nothing for you. Good-day, sir;" and the lawyer opened the door.

Leon had now about lost hope, but he mechanically walked into the office of another lawyer.

No sooner had he mentioned the name of Sinclair than the lawyer jumped to his feet, saying: "It is no use talking any further. I am too busy now to undertake your case."

Weary and heartsore Leon returned to his hotel; he did not venture out for several days. Then the clerk of the hotel sent his bill. This rather startled Leon. He counted his money; he found he had but \$500. He paid his bill and began to think of economizing.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARK HITON—LAWYER.

LATE in the afternoon he went down-stairs and walked in the hotel corridor in a most gloomy frame of mind.

The hotel clerk handed him a letter ; he tore it open and read it. It was written on a lawyer's letter sheet and ran thus :

“ Mr. Leon Pelon.

“ DEAR SIR :—I would like to see you at my office to-morrow at 12 o'clock. MARK HITON.”

It would have amused Leon's European friends to have seen him as he read this note. He read it over and over again ; then he looked at his watch ; then walked up and down the hotel corridor ; he went to his room, then went out and walked up one street and down another ; then he went to the street where the office of Hiton was located and cautiously approached the building.

He looked at it from the opposite side of the street standing in a doorway ; he gazed at the building for half an hour.

Men came out. Leon peered at them anxiously and wondered if any of them was the lawyer he was

to call on. He gazed at the building until it was dark; then the janitor came down and locked the outer door. And not till then did Leon return to his hotel.

He went through the form of eating his dinner, but everything was tasteless; he went to his room but could not stay there; he went into the street and walked until the clock struck twelve; then he went back to the hotel and to bed, but he could not sleep.

After what seemed an almost interminable period he heard the clock strike one. Then when he expected to see daylight he heard the clock strike two. There he lay and heard each hour strike until six o'clock when he fell into an unquiet slumber.

He slept until ten o'clock and awoke with a start. He dressed in great haste and was in the neighborhood of Mr. Hiton's office by half-past eleven. He walked around the block and in the neighborhood until the clock struck twelve; then he hastened to the building and entered.

The manners of the trembling individual who stood in the outer office of lawyer Hiton, hat in hand, asking in a hesitating voice if he could see Mr. Hiton, was in decided contrast with the manners of the same individual a few weeks before at Heidelberg or Paris.

The office boy took Leon's card into the private office, while Leon sat in a corner holding his hat.

Once in a while he could hear voices in the private office, but strain his ears as he would he could not distinguish a connected sentence.

Sometimes he would hear a burst of hearty laughter, which he thought ill-timed, considering the gravity of the matter he had to present to the lawyer.

Fully one-half an hour he waited; then there was an uproarious burst of laughter and the door opened and five men came out laughing.

One of them eyed Leon sharply as he passed him, then the office boy said to Leon, "Now, sir."

Leon entered the office.

Mr. Hiton's face was still wrinkled with the merriment of the last laugh. As Leon entered the room he was tying up a bundle of papers. He was a hearty, good-looking individual; he turned to Leon with a smile on his face.

"So you are Mr. Pelon, are you?" said he.

"Yes, sir," said Leon.

"Take a seat."

Leon took a seat and braced himself to tell the story.

"So your guardian has treated you very badly?" Leon was surprised at this knowledge of his affairs, but he answered:

"Yes, sir, he has taken everything."

"You say the estate was worth over seven million dollars when your father died?"

"I didn't know the amount, sir," said Leon rather startled at the sum named.

The lawyer paid no attention to the interruption, as he went on.

"And you say that with ordinary care and foresight it should by this time be worth nine millions."

"I didn't—er—er—say," faltered Leon as his eyes bulged out with surprise.

The lawyer again went on without paying the least attention to the interruption.

"And you say (with considerable emphasis on say) that this executor and guardian betrayed his trust in the most villainous manner."

Leon opened his mouth to speak but merely took a deep breath. He knew he hadn't said anything of the kind, but he had no chance to deny it.

"You say," said the lawyer, "that he kept you in Heidelberg so that he might despoil the estate in your absence, that he only allowed you ten thousand a year which was not a twentieth part of the income."

Poor Leon thought of the twenty thousand a year which was so necessary to his happiness and which he might as well have had as not.

"You say," went on the lawyer, "that this executor and guardian systematically changed the investments; that he sold good paying securities and substituted worthless ones; you say that within six months he called in two millions five hundred thousand dollars which was invested in bond and

mortgage on real estate and which was as good security as the market afforded and placed it on real estate which was unproductive and unmarketable. That not a dollar of interest was paid after the change, and no money was realized on the security. That the property is utterly worthless——”

Leon gave a gasp as he said, “I—I don’t know as——”

“Yes, you do,” said the lawyer, “on information and belief.”

“Oh !” said Leon, drawing in his breath.

“You verily believe,” said the lawyer, as if he were delivering a lecture, as he occasionally glanced at some slips of paper, “that through the aid and connivance and through other parties unknown to you, and by violating the terms of his trust he has converted to his own use the whole of the estate left by your father, and that he is now in possession and enjoyment of the same.”

The lawyer continued in this strain for some time while Leon looked at him in a helpless sort of way. At length he said, “I didn’t know he was such a rascal.”

“Well,” said Mr. Hiton, with a yawn, “we are all rascals, only we are not all found out. Johnson,” he called.

“Yes, sir,” said a voice so close to Leon that it made him start, and Johnson came from behind a screen,

"Is it ready?" asked the lawyer.

"In a moment, sir," and Johnson again disappeared behind the screen.

Leon wanted to speak to Mr. Hiton, but that gentleman was busily engaged in looking over some papers.

In a few minutes Johnson returned with a number of neatly written sheets of paper.

"Now," said the lawyer, turning to Leon, "sign this and swear to it."

"What is it, sir?" faltered Leon.

"Why, it is what you have been saying. There," said the lawyer touching a line, "sign right there."

Leon signed without the slightest idea of what he was doing.

"You swear," said the lawyer, raising his hand.

Leon mechanically raised his hand and said, "Swear."

"That's right," said the lawyer, and he handed the papers to Johnson, who carried them away.

"You are living at the Central Hotel?" said the lawyer.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you like it there?"

"Not very well," said Leon.

"How would you like to hoe corn or dig potatoes for a living?" asked the lawyer with a meaning look.

The question was as startling as though the lawyer

had thrown a cup of cold water into Leon's face. He felt like a man who was suddenly plunged into a cold bath. He looked at the lawyer to see if he was joking, then said in a feeble voice, "I would not like it."

"Now," said the lawyer, looking him squarely in the eyes, "listen, you must leave that hotel at once—at once; do you understand? You must not go back. I will send for your baggage and have it stored. I will assign you a place to live. You will go to work to-morrow; have you learned any trade?"

Leon was so weak that he was just able to say in a faltering tone, "No."

"I thought not," said the lawyer. "Well, you will have to go to work as a laborer."

Leon flushed angrily as he said, "I will do nothing of the sort."

"Now, young man, don't be hasty," said the lawyer; "you can do as you please, there is no compulsion about the matter, but before you make up your mind finally let me say this: If you don't go to work as a laborer in Pactolus you will go to work as a laborer on some of the country plantations and you will never be heard of again."

Leon saw by the lawyer's face that he meant what he said.

"Perhaps," continued the lawyer, "it is only fair for me to say that Sinclair has a vast amount of power; he has a thousand men in this city who will

do anything he requires. The moment proceedings are begun for the recovery of your father's estate you will be kidnapped and sent to some distant part of the country, or"—the lawyer paused—"you may be found drowned in the river. We have thought the matter over carefully and concluded that the only way we can checkmate Sinclair is to bury you in some of the gangs of laborers.

"But," said Leon, and the tears came into his eyes,—

"There is no 'but' about it," said the lawyer positively; "the whole matter has been gone over carefully and has been settled; now, unless you follow our directions implicitly, without question, we will throw up the case. Now, what will you do?"

"I don't know," said Leon in a helpless way.

"That's just what I thought," said the lawyer, "you don't know; well, I will tell you what you will do; you will change your clothes before you leave this building, and go right in among the laborers; your name will be George Wilson."

"How long will I be with the laborers?" asked Leon.

"I don't know," said the lawyer.

"Will you be able to win my case?" he asked.

"I don't know. Mind," said the lawyer, "if you have any regard for your life, don't say anything about your affairs or these proceedings and, above all things, don't reveal your identity."

The lawyer rang a bell three times. Leon felt a choking sensation in his throat as he said : " When will I see you again ? "

" When we want you we will send for you. "

At that moment a man entered ; the lawyer turned to him and said : " This is George Wilson ; you have your instructions. "

The man bowed and motioned to Leon who arose and, in a dazed sort of way, followed the man out of the room ; he felt as a man who had been condemned to imprisonment.

His conductor led the way to a small room on the other side of the outer office, and pointing to some coarse clothes lying on a chair, said : " There are your clothes, put them on. "

Leon was in the condition of a man who had lost all power of resistance. He did what he was told without demur.

" Your clothes and jewelry will be kept for you, " said his conductor, as Leon finished dressing and stood before him transformed into a laborer.

Just then the lawyer entered ; he turned to Leon.

" You will please remember that we are under no obligation to take up your case, but we will do the best we can, provided you aid us as far as you know how. "

" How ? " said Leon.

" By concealing your identity ; but if you by stu-

pidity or inattention betray yourself, I don't think we will be able to aid you farther."

"You speak of 'we,'" said Leon. "May I ask how 'we' is made up?"

"No," said the lawyer, "I am the only 'we' you can know."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SLANDER.

LEON was one of those most careless of mortals; he did not seem to desire to assume responsibilities, either great or small; when he wanted anything it was almost always within reach—not in the quantities he desired but enough to secure his reasonable wants—and so it had always been; he was a spoiled child from his infancy.

If he had anything to do, he did it, if he felt like doing it; if he did not feel so disposed, he let it pass no matter what the costs or consequences might be. He said, “I am in the world to enjoy myself, and anything that interferes with my pleasure or comfort I avoid or I will have it removed from my vicinity.”

There was one duty he did perform regularly, and probably because it was more of a pleasure than a duty; this was writing his weekly letter to Millicent. She was also faithful in the correspondence. Leon received a letter from her each week.

One day—her letter day, as Millicent called it—her father came home as usual, kissed her as usual, sat throughout the dinner as usual, but did not, as

usual on her letter day, toss her a letter with his customary remark—

“Here is some candy for you, Millie.”

Millicent was a very sensitive girl and she watched her father all through dinner, hoping each moment that he would give her a letter. She was afraid to ask for it lest she would be subjected to the usual teasing. Then she thought there had been some delay in the mails, as a number of hints had no effect in producing a letter.

She waited until the next day, but the letter did not arrive, and on the third day she said:

“Papa, have you a letter for me?” Her father moved uneasily in his chair and did not look at her as he said hastily, “No.”

“Is there any delay in the mails?” she asked.

Her father became still more uneasy as he said:

“There may be.” Then as Millicent looked searchingly at him he added, “No, no. The mails are all right.”

A month passed and Millicent received no letter from Leon. She in the mean time had written several letters to him asking why he had not written, but received no reply.

There is a reason for everything, and the reason why Millicent received no letter from Leon can be easily explained. The Hon. Daniel Sinclair had resorted to the old trick of intercepting the letters of both Millicent and Leon.

He imagined that he was enjoying himself as he read and made cynical comments on the letters of the young lovers, after which he burned them.

One evening, a little more than a month after Millicent had ceased to receive letters from Leon, Mr. Sinclair was in his library; he sent for Millicent and as she came in he said to her: "Sit down, Millicent," he motioned to a low stool at his feet; she sat down resting her arm on his knee.

He talked on several subjects of gossip, but Millicent took but a languid interest in them; she had become very listless of late and seemed to have grown more and more sad and thoughtful day by day.

They were sitting in front of the fire gazing at the glowing embers, when Sinclair said:

"I fear, Millie, that Leon has turned out bad."

"Why?" she said eagerly turning and facing her father.

Sinclair avoided her eye as he continued:

"Oh, he has got in with a lot of bad men and women and has squandered all of his estate."

He put special emphasis on the word women.

"I hear that he has been living at a frightful rate."

"From whom did you learn this?" asked Millicent.

"Oh, from some people who are over there. Here are some letters." Her father took several letters from his pocket and read extracts from them which gave details of Leon's alleged excesses.

Occasionally he would pause abruptly in his reading and say:

“This is not fit for you to hear.”

Millicent struggled to be calm; her eyes were distended and her breath was coming thick and fast; she seemed to be struggling with a fierce conflict and before he had finished reading the letters, she said in an agitated voice:

“Can nothing be done to save—stop him?”

“I fear not,” answered her father; “once a gambler, always a gambler.”

There was a long pause while Millicent gazed at the fire. Her father watched her closely; after a time he broke the silence by saying, in a voice of assumed carelessness:

“How much better it is that we found him out before——”

He had put his hand on her head, and was going to say “marriage,” but Millicent brushed his hand away, and rising went toward the door.

“Where are you going, Millicent?” he called.

“I am going to my room—my head aches,” she said.

Her father was startled as he caught sight of the pale face which seemed drawn with agony.

When she reached her room she threw herself across the bed and lay there for hours thinking, thinking, thinking and weighing the facts that her father had brought to her notice. They all seemed to prove that Leon was unworthy.

She asked herself the question "Is there any hope of rescuing him? Is he worth it?" she said in indignation. Then pride came to her relief, and she said to herself, "He has ignored me, now let him go his way."

Millicent appeared at the breakfast table in the morning at the usual hour. She was very pale and quiet and to her father she was formal and cold.

CHAPTER XIX.

POOR LITTLE "CHIRP."

IMMEDIATELY after Mr. Hiton left, Leon's conductor turned to him and said, "Are you ready?"

Leon said, "I am," and the man said, "Come along."

Leon found that his conductor was a man of few words; he answered no questions except by saying, "I don't know," or "I have no authority to state."

After walking for some time they found themselves in a tenement district and his conductor led the way into one of the tenements.

They walked up to the second story and the man knocked at a door which was opened by a care-worn looking woman. She looked at him inquiringly and then glanced at Leon.

The conductor smiled and said:

"Mrs. Waldo, this is a new boarder; he will work in the yard with your husband and the others."

The woman nodded to Leon and then the man, turning, said:

"Hand this letter to the superintendent at the yard in the morning."

"What yard?" asked Leon, and the conductor replied:

"Mr. Waldo will tell you."

With that the man turned and walked down the stairs.

Leon remarked to the woman that it was a pleasant day.

"Yes," she replied in a weary voice; "pleasant enough for those who can enjoy it." Then she said: "I will show you where you will sleep."

She led the way through a hall to a rear room with three beds in it.

"That's your bed," she said pointing to one.

"Will any one else sleep in the room?" Leon asked.

She looked at him in surprise a moment and then answered:

"Certainly,—two others."

She left the room before Leon could offer an indignant protest which had sprung to his lips; he was about to call after her, but contented himself by muttering as he sat down on the side of his bed,

"We will see about that." He glanced around the room; everything was neat and clean. It was entirely destitute of ornaments, and had, besides three beds, two chairs and a washstand by way of furniture. The place looked so desolate that it made him feel very blue.

Hearing a slight noise at the door, he looked up and saw a little girl of about nine years of age look-

ing at him. Leon was pleased at the interruption and he called out, "Hello! who are you?"

The little girl stood in the doorway as she answered:

"Gertie; but they call me Chirp."

"Oh, well, come in."

The child paused and looked down.

"Come in, Chirp, won't you; that's a good girl."

She walked shyly into the room. Leon noticed that she was a pretty creature, but was very thin and her big brown eyes had a hungry look in them. She stared at and looked him over in a shrewd way before she said:

"Are you the new boarder?"

Leon smiled as he replied:

"I guess I am."

She looked at him again, then nodded her head wisely as she said half to herself,

"I guess I like you." She jumped on the bed beside him, tucked her arm in his and pillowed her head against his shoulder.

Leon was very much touched by this demonstration of affection. His had been such a lonely life since he returned to Pactolus that he had commenced to feel that he was utterly alone—that there was no one to say a kind word to him or to show any interest in him.

As he felt her arm in his and her head against his shoulder, his eyes filled with tears. They sat to-

gether for several minutes; she looking out of the window; he surreptitiously wiping his eyes.

After a time he recovered control of his feelings, and he lifted her on to his lap. She was pleased and smiled as she said with a pout: "I am not a baby," but she nestled herself in his arms as if she were a baby. She gave a tired sigh.

"Are you tired?" she said.

"No," said Leon; "are you?"

"I am almost always tired."

"Nonsense," said he; "what makes you tired?"

"I guess I don't get enough sleep."

"Why not?"

"It's late when I get to bed, and then I have to get up real early in the morning."

"You shouldn't play so much and then you wouldn't be so tired," said Leon as he patted her head.

She raised herself and looked at him with reproachful, wondering eyes.

"Play?" she said; "I don't play, I work."

"Work?" said Leon with an ill concealed smile.

"Do you work? What work do you do?"

"I work in the straw-hat factory. Do you know Mrs. Perkins?"

"No."

"Well, she is a hard woman."

"A what?" said Leon trying to keep back a smile.

"A hard woman; she bosses us girls in the factory." Then thoughtfully, "perhaps she ain't hard

of herself; perhaps they make her. Do you know, if you are a tiny little minute late she fines you five cents. Isn't that mean?"

"Yes," said Leon, "very."

"Yes, and you have got to get there at seven in the morning and I don't get home till seven in the evening and I tell you I get awful tired."

"Why don't you go to bed when you get home?"

"Go to bed when I get home?" she asked contemptuously, and at the same time giving a shrill little laugh. "And who would help get the dinner for the boarders when they get home?"

"Do you help?" said Leon.

"Of course I do," she said; "and then when we get through washing the dishes and setting the table for the morning it is ten o'clock; I go to sleep drying the dishes sometimes. I broke a plate that way once; mean, wasn't it?"

"Perhaps you couldn't help it," said Leon.

"I didn't always have such a hard time of it," said she in a sort of a dreamy way as she looked out of the window at the clouds, "my sister used to help—she was older than me. Oh," she said with a sigh, "I had easy times then."

"Where is she now?" asked Leon.

"Dead——"

"Dead?" said Leon starting.

"Yes, she could not stand it. She had so little sleep and the work was so hard and the dust in the

factory made her cough and she coughed so hard that she had what they call hemorrhage and she was too weak to get over it so she died in three days—poor, poor Estelle.”

Then there was a pause. Leon glanced down at his charge and saw the tears coursing down her cheeks.

“Poor child,” he said pressing her to him.

“Oh, don’t mind me; I know I am foolish, but sister was so kind to me.”

Suddenly she started and jumped off his lap.

“I must go now and help mother,” she said as she wiped her eyes with her apron. Then she looked at Leon eagerly:

“Do I look as if I was crying?”

“Well,” said Leon, “a little.”

The child made a sort of a grimace which was intended for a smile.

“Do I now?” she said.

Leon was obliged to admit that there were still some traces of weeping. The little creature then polished her face vigorously with her apron.

“There,” she said, “I know how to fix it.” With that she started out of the room, whistling a lively tune.

Leon looked after her with an amused smile; in a moment she was back. She stood in the doorway and raised her finger mysteriously:

“I forgot,” she said; “don’t tell mamma.”

"Don't tell her what?"

"Don't," she said in an earnest whisper, "don't tell her I was tired and sleepy, because if you do, she won't let me help her and then she will have all the work to do herself."

Then she put her hands on his shoulders and looked coaxingly in his eyes as she added:

"You won't, will you?"

"No," he said.

She patted him on the cheek and said:

"There's a good fellow."

She started out of the room, but stopped at the threshold and faced him with an anxious expression.

"Is the cry all gone?" she said.

He looked at her critically as he replied:

"Yes."

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"I guess I had better whistle and make sure;" and with that she walked out of the room whistling.

A little after eight o'clock, Leon was summoned to dinner. There were four men besides Mr. and Mrs. Waldo and Chirp.

Mr. Waldo introduced Leon. Their names were Johnson, Martin, Converse and Reilly. Mr. Waldo was an intelligent man who had been in the hardware business several years before, and for a time was very successful. But shortly after the organiza-

tion of the company, his business steadily declined. What little he had saved from the wreckage of his business was spent; he was now employed in one of the company's brick yards as a day laborer.

The other boarders were employed in the same place and with the same company. Johnson and Martin were young men, and had been clerks. Converse was at one time a builder. Reilly had always been a laborer. The clothing of all the men was red with the brick they handled.

Leon's dinner consisted of a liberal slice of corn meal cake fried in fat; he also had a small piece of boiled pork, together with a black fluid called coffee. Leon's taste was shocked at the food placed before him, but he was too polite to make any comment.

There was little conversation during the meal. The men ate rapidly, then went down-stairs and sat on the door step in front of the house.

After dinner Leon went out for a walk. When he returned he found the two young men fast asleep in his room; he went to bed and after a long period of tossing about, he fell asleep. It seemed to him only a few minutes had elapsed when he was awakened by Mr. Waldo who said, "It is time to get up."

Leon arose and washed himself in the tin basin on the washstand, and made his toilet, such as it was, and went into the breakfast room. The other men had already eaten their breakfast; they nodded to

him in a depressing sort of way. Chirp was the only one who gave him a cheerful greeting. He was quite hungry, however, and ate a goodly portion of the fried cake and drank his coffee. He felt thoroughly humbled when Mrs. Waldo handed him a parcel and told him it was his lunch.

The moment he had finished breakfast, Mr. Waldo said:

“Mr. Wilson, we will have to hurry, or we will be late.”

Leon hardly recognized his new name and a strange feeling came over him as he heard it, but he arose and followed Mr. Waldo.

They walked for nearly an hour before they came to an immense yard which they entered. Mr. Waldo introduced Leon to a man who appeared to be in charge and handed him the letter his conductor had left the day before.

The overseer referred to a book for a moment, and then said, “This is right.”

Waldo turned and walked away; Leon was about to follow when the man said, “Hold on, you; wait until you are marked.”

He rang a bell and in a few seconds a laborer came in.

“Number this man,” said the overseer.

The laborer produced a pot of white paint and a stencil.

“What is the number?” he said.

The overseer again referred to his book and read as follows:

K. P., 2847.

Leon felt a strong inclination to resent this indignity.

He flushed as he braced himself to say, "I will not stand this," but as he looked at the overseer and saw what a determined-looking fellow he was, and at the same time he noticed that everything was done in a matter-of-course and business-like way, he felt it was useless to resist; his courage died out and he submitted.

The laborer stenciled the letters and figures on the breast of his coat, and then said, "Now turn around."

Leon did so and the man placed the same marks on his left shoulder. When the marking was completed, the overseer said,

"Take him to Ryan's gang."

The man nodded to Leon as he said, "Come on."

Leon followed him and after walking some distance through the yard around great stacks of bricks, they met a rather large man with a coarse red face. He carried in his hand a large whip or scorpion the end of which was ornamented with a tassel of twist-steel wire.

"He's a new un," said Leon's guide.

The large man looked at him for a moment as if taking his measure and then said,

“Go to work there;” and he pointed to a group of men unloading a stack of bricks.

Leon joined the group and was pleased to see Mr. Waldo was among them.

“I am glad you are with me,” said Waldo, “for I can tell you what to do, if you need instruction.”

While talking Waldo kept at his work.

“Am I to pile up these bricks?” asked Leon.

“Yes, go right to work or the overseer will be down on you.”

Leon looked ruefully at his delicate, white hands. Waldo noticed him and said,

“You need not look at your hands, they will be rough enough soon; mine were once as white and shapely as yours.”

Leon began his labor.

At night when he reached home, he was very hungry and managed to eat a large meal for him, and, after a little chat with Chirp, went to bed. He felt that he had not sufficient rest in the morning when Mr. Waldo waked him.

Mr. Waldo consoled him by saying, “That that is a common complaint, but it can’t be helped.”

After a week had passed, he became in a measure used to his manner of life, and became social with the people in the house. The Holts lived in the same house, and he became acquainted with Randolph Holt and Dr. Clark. He did not meet Maud Holt, she had disappeared. He frequently spent his

evenings with them, or in their rooms. Sometimes he would take Chirp out for a walk and was much amused at her shrewd remarks and the queer notions which seemed to pop out of her wise little head at all times.

Coming home one evening, he met her in the hallway on her way up-stairs. She had a weary look and seemed to have been crying.

"What's the matter?" he said putting his arm around her.

The child leaned wearily against him and he almost lifted her off her feet as he helped her up-stairs into his room.

"What is the matter?" he repeated.

"Nothing," she said, and she sank into a seat; "only I am tired—awful tired."

Leon lifted her bodily and laid her full length on his bed.

"What is the matter with that?" he said smiling. She smiled as she drew a long sigh as if satisfied.

"Nothing is the matter with that," she said; then she paused for a moment and she closed her eyes and added, "'cept I must help mamma, you know."

"Not for a few minutes," said Leon, coaxingly.

"Oh, if I could only lie here and rest forever and ever, and never get up again, wouldn't that be fun?"

"Great fun," said Leon.

"Ain't resting nice?" she said in a half whisper.

"Hullo Regie, hullo Harry."

These salutations were addressed to Leon's room-mates who at that moment came in.

They both kissed her.

Regie as she called Reginald, was a special friend of Chirp's. He was a well-formed young man with a kindly face. He sat on the side of the bed and looked anxiously into Chirp's face while she patted his head.

"You don't look well, Chirp," he said. "What is the matter?"

"I'm only a little tired," she said.

Then she started. "Oh, my goodness," she said, "I must go and help mamma."

She slid out of bed and when she reached the door she turned and shook her fist at the three young men. Then putting one finger on her lips, she pointed toward the kitchen where her mother was at work. Then with a sad attempt to smile cheerfully, she blew a kiss to each of the young men and disappeared.

CHAPTER XX.

LAW AS SHE IS ADMINISTERED.

ABOUT one week after Leon's visits to his office, Mr. Hiton, as he expressed it, "Fired his first gun." He cited Mr. Sinclair before the court to render an account of his management of the Pelon estate.

Mr. Sinclair was simply astounded and could hardly express his feelings when he thought of the audacity of a lawyer taking a case against a member of the directory. It was without precedent. His indignation knew no bounds. He made up his mind not only to stamp out the whole proceeding, but to annihilate Hiton and to do so in the most summary manner. But when he read the papers which had been served on him a second time and had become more calm, he noticed that Hiton had considerable knowledge of his affairs, and he reasoned that he must have obtained the facts from some influential quarter. He made up his mind, however, to bully Hiton into dropping the case; failing in that, he would buy him off, and, failing in the latter, he determined to coerce the court. As the court was a creation of the directory, he did not anticipate any trouble in succeeding—if it was necessary to go that length.

He called on Mr. Hiton, and, with a great show of anger, indignantly demanded if it was he who had dared to take proceedings against him.

He found Mr. Hiton polite, imperturbable, and determined to proceed with the case and he left the office in a passion. The case was to come on in a few days.

Some one suggested to Sinclair that it would be a good move to get possession of all the documents that Hiton had. He acted on the suggestion instantly and for that purpose he sent ten of his retainers armed with clubs and implements for forcing the door of Hiton's office. They also had burglars' tools which, in case of necessity, could be used in breaking open the safe.

The men got to Hiton's office about eleven at night and forced the outer door without difficulty. The janitor came running down-stairs to ascertain the cause of the disturbance and was promptly knocked insensible and thrown into a corner.

"The Posse," as Sinclair called it, proceeded upstairs and without difficulty forced the door of Mr. Hiton's office. No sooner were they inside the doorway, than the door was closed and each man felt a noose about his neck and a cold muzzle of a revolver placed against his face.

"Surrender!" came an order; and, at the same moment, the gas was lighted, revealing to the astonished house-breakers a room full of armed men.

The man who appeared to be in command, said with a grim smile,

“Good evening, gentlemen. We are a reception committee to whom Mr. Hiton has delegated the duty of entertaining you; but, don’t you think that robbing law offices is a most unprofitable business?” He then said to his men, “Relieve these gentlemen of their arms and march them to the lock-up.”

This was done without difficulty and inside of five moments all was quiet and the office was again dark.

Mr. Hiton was well posted on the methods of the directory.

He knew that Sinclair would not hesitate to commit burglary if necessary to get rid of any evidence which he suspected might be in Hiton’s possession and he prepared for the visit.

Then Sinclair made a vigorous search for Leon. Spies were sent in all directions. Hiton as well as all his clerks were dogged day and night; many of his employees were approached with bribes; but Hiton, as a general thing, kept his own counsel and no one knew of Leon’s whereabouts with the exception of one trusted clerk.

The ridiculous failure of Sinclair’s marauding party was very bad for him and his case.

He had a number of enemies in the directory, and they made all manner of fun of him. Wherever he went he found people cracking jokes at his expense and this was emphasized by the fact—that the sole

test of ability among members of the directory was success. Success atoned for every evil deed, every crime, every wrong.

Right at the beginning of his contest with an attorney he had miserably failed, and that, too, in a way which was inexcusable.

The looting of the Pelon estate became a general topic of conversation, gossip and scandal.

The robbery of the estate was so complete, enormous and audacious, that it almost took people's breath away when they heard of it; and, when Sinclair's counsel came into court and asked for more time to prepare his answer, there was a feeling that the defence was weak, especially as it was known that Sinclair had sent for the judge who was to hear the preliminary motion in the case, and that the judge had not responded to his summons. This was ominous.

It was a long time since a judge had refused to do the bidding of a member of the directory, except when the dispute was between members.

"There must be some one backing young Pelon," said one member of the directory to another.

"I shouldn't wonder if there is; I wonder who it is," asked the person addressed.

"I haven't the least idea; but it must be some pretty strong backing."

"If the matter should be decided against Sinclair," said another, "it would destroy his influence."

“Yes,” answered the first speaker, “and it is said that he used the money of the estate to buy his way into the directory; that that was his sole capital.”

A number of the directory friends of Sinclair went with him to see Judge Willow to induce him to revoke his order requiring Sinclair to file a further account of his administration of the Pelon estate.

The judge assumed a judicial air and told them, with considerable severity, that he would hear any motion they wished to make in open court.

This astonished the directors beyond measure.

“Do you know who we are?” said one of the directors.

“I do,” said the judge, “and I intend to do my duty in this matter and do not intend to be influenced by any man great or small.”

“Since when have you grown so virtuous that you ignore the requests of a director?” said the director with a sneer.

The judge winced but simply said: “I will hear any motion you have to make in open court.”

“If we make a motion in open court, will it be granted?” asked the director.

“It will,” said the judge, “if the court deems it a proper one.”

This was followed by a burst of profanity and a long parley in which promises and threats were alike unavailing.

"What is the matter with the fool?" said Sinclair to Director Willis.

"Got the big head," was the reply of the director. "Or," and he looked Sinclair squarely in the eye, "he has received instructions."

"Do you think so?" asked Sinclair anxiously. "From whom?"

"That we will have to find out," said the director.

"But we had better see what we can do with Judge Otis."

This they did and Judge Otis revoked the order of Judge Willow.

That order blocked the proceedings in the case of Pelon.

This was an unprecedented conflict of authority, but Mark Hiton was not discouraged: "Just what I want," he said, and going into court he made a furious attack on Judge Otis, procured another order from Judge Willow stronger than the first and at the same time vacating the order of Judge Otis.

This order Sinclair refused to obey.

Then an order was made to commit him for contempt of court.

Then followed an appeal from this order and the appeal was successful. The Appellate Court decided that the directory could not be compelled to obey an order of any judge.

The director must first be impeached.

This was another victory for Sinclair. Thus Leon's

case was ended so far as the courts were concerned.

Hiton said he was not disheartened, but laid his plans for impeachment proceedings.

There was a great deal of wire-pulling and log-rolling, and to the surprise of everybody charges were made by Director Mayhew and articles of impeachment were presented by Director Curtain, the chairman of a committee appointed to investigate.

This startled Sinclair and he went to see if a compromise could not be effected.

Mr. Hiton looked him squarely in the eye as he said: "There are some phases of villany which it would be a crime to compromise."

"Villany?" said Sinclair fiercely as he clinched his fist.

"I said villany, Mr. Sinclair," said Hiton emphatically, "and if you like it better I will say damnable villany."

Sinclair made an effort to control himself as he said: "You don't seem to remember that I am a director."

"Yes, I do," said Hiton, "but I won't have to do so long!"

Then came a tremendous struggle to secure enough votes to carry or defeat the impeachment proceedings.

One of the strangest things about the whole pro-

ceeding was the fact that Hiton seemed to have a great deal of influence among the directors.

They treated him with almost the same degree of deference as fellow-members of the board

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW A LITTLE GIRL DIED.

ONE evening when Leon returned from work he saw Chirp leaning against the street door; she was very pale; she had a small parcel in her hand—some trifle which she had purchased at the store.

“Well, Chirp, here you are again,” said Leon as he came behind her; he put his arm around her waist so as to support her up-stairs and he found she needed it. He almost carried her.

At dinner she ate scarcely anything and as she arose from the table she said: “I feel so dizzy,” then sank to the floor. She tried to get up but she could not.

“Isn’t it funny I can’t get up,” she said with a laugh which seemed all weighed down with tears.

Her father caught her up in his arms saying: “My poor child, you are ill.”

Her head fell on his shoulder and she burst out crying.

“Don’t, don’t cry, my darling,” said he in a choked voice.

He carried her to her bed. They all followed.

“There, now,” he said as he laid her down; “now you are all right.”

“What is it, pet?” her mother said as she leaned over her.

But the child continued to cry in a heart-breaking way.

She tried to get up but fell back exhausted; then her grief broke out afresh.

“Now,” she said, “now there is no one to help mamma.”

Leon and the others stood around the bed.

“Yes, there is,” said Leon, “we will all help her.”

“Will you?” she said through her sobs. “Will you?”

“Yes,” said they in chorus.

The little creature smiled through her tears, “Oh, you are so—so good,” she said.

Her eyes closed wearily and they left this brave little hero alone with her mother whom she had tried so hard to assist.

The young men were as good as their word and they did in a clumsy way the house work, while Mr. Waldo went for Dr. Clark whom he brought back with him.

The doctor said she needed rest and strengthening food.

He prescribed some simple remedies such as they could procure with their small means.

The next evening when they returned from work, Chirp was still quite ill. Leon and Regi took turns

watching by her bedside while Mrs. Waldo took some needed rest.

The following evening she was very weak and at times a little flighty. She smacked her lips from time to time. Suddenly she said: "I thought I was eating grapes. Oh, wasn't they nice!"

Then after a pause she said in a whisper, "I wish I had some now," then again, "No, I don't; what would I do with grapes? But if I was rich I'd have some; I'd have a whole lot."

"Mamma," she said, stroking her mother's head, "you think I want grapes, but I don't."

"I wonder if I could get her some?" said Leon.

"I am afraid not," said her father in a hopeless voice.

"I will try," said Leon.

The mother gave him a grateful smile, and he went out.

The child continued to talk in a queer way, but the craving for grapes was uppermost in her mind.

Every few minutes she would realize the impossibility of getting grapes and would disclaim any desire for them. She seemed to be dying for want of a few grapes.

Her father was in agony; he went outside and walked up and down the hall as if he were out of his mind.

In an hour Leon returned. To her father's eager

inquiring look he replied by shaking his head sadly.

Leon heard Chirp say as he stood in the hall, "If I only had three grapes that would be enough—only three. That ain't much—only three grapes."

Regi came out of the room looking like a crazy man. He caught Leon by the arm.

"Did you get any?"

"No," said Leon; "there is not one to be had anywhere; people seemed to think I was crazy when I asked for them."

"I know where there are grapes—plenty of them," Regi said in a low voice, "and I am going to get them."

"Where?" said the father.

"At Camden's greenhouses."

"No, no! you must not, it is death," said the father detaining him.

"Hands off," said Regi as he wrenched himself free and ran down the stairs. Leon followed, but he was out of sight before Leon got to the street door.

"Where is Camden's greenhouse?" he asked Mr. Waldo who had joined him at the door.

"Why do you want to know?" The old man demanded.

"I want to go with Reginald."

"Well, I won't tell you," said Waldo in a determined voice. "It is enough for one man to risk his

life—and besides one is as good as twenty; there is less danger.”

“Why is it so dangerous?” asked Leon.

“Because it is the property of George Camden, and he is one of the most vindictive and cruel of all the directors. He has had children beaten almost to death for plucking a few flowers from his grounds. Night and day he has armed men patrolling his grounds, and I fear it is impossible for that poor boy to escape with his life if he ventures on the grounds, poor fellow.”

They turned and went into the house and up to the sick-room.

Chirp was still talking and tossing on the bed. Dr. Clark was giving her a soothing drink, but every few minutes she would speak of grapes or peaches or some other fruit.

She would suddenly realize that they were beyond her reach. Then she would say: “Oh, I don’t want any, you know.” Then later, “Grapes grow nice, don’t they? All in bunches? Oh, dear, I am such a bother, I am thirsty again.”

Then when her mother gave her a drink she said, “I’m an awful bother, ain’t I?” Her mother was obliged to turn away to hide her tears as she said, “No—no, you darling, you are not.”

“Oh, I am, I know I am—me talking about grapes, you would think I was a director. Oh, no, I don’t want any grapes. Don’t ever think that I want

them, mamma," and the sick child tried to laugh. It was such a weak little laugh that it went to the heart of every one present.

Then she lay exhausted with a wistful look on her face. Her mother was stroking her head.

"She is dying!" said her father in an agonized whisper to the doctor; "can't you save her?"

"I have done my utmost within my limited means," said the doctor hopelessly. "If she had a few grapes they would refresh and revive her, but——"

"I will go to the hot-house and beg some in the morning," said her father.

There was something in the doctor's face which alarmed him. He caught the doctor by the arm.

"What! Won't she live till morning?"

"I fear not," the doctor said, looking toward the little head which was tossing on the pillow.

"She must, she will live; she can't die. I say she must not die——"

The doctor put his hand over Mr. Waldo's mouth and forced him from the room.

"Stop your noise," he said in a stern whisper. "Do you want to kill the child?"

"Oh, forgive me!" cried the father. "I did not think what I was doing."

He tried to enter the room again, but the doctor stopped him. "Please let me in again. I won't speak above a whisper. I won't; I promise I will be quiet."

“Now, I warn you,” said the doctor, “that the least noise may snap the thread that holds her life. Do you understand?”

“I do,” said the father, and he leaned against the door post as though his strength had deserted him.

As they entered the room, Chirp’s eyes were closed. She smacked her lips in a feeble sort of way as she said:

“I—I will have a great big bunch of grapes some day, won’t I, mamma; a great big bunch of sweet ones?”

At that moment there was a noise as of some one coming up-stairs. The sound approached nearer.

It was the sound of the steps of some one mounting the stairs rapidly; then footsteps were heard in the hall and Regi came panting into the room. He stepped quickly to the bed and placed three bunches of grapes on the coverlet in front of Chirp.

The little creature opened her eyes and gave a scream of delight.

“Oh, oh, oh!” she cried; “grapes, grapes!”

With an effort she lifted the smallest bunch to her face.

“Don’t they smell sweet?” she cried.

Her mother put one to the child’s lips; she sucked it eagerly; another and another she ate until she had eaten half a dozen. She became animated and seemed to grow stronger.

“How selfish I am,” she said, “won’t you all have

some ?” Then to Regie, “Oh, Regie, where did you get these ? You good, good fellow. Kiss me.”

He knelt by the side of the bed and kissed her; she put her weak little hands on each side of his head and held it.

“Oh, you good, good fellow,” she said, “where did you get them——”

A step was heard outside. An officer walked into the room. He answered the question:

“Stand where you are,” he said. “Mr. Camden’s hot-house has been broken into and fruit stolen. I saw the thief as he was escaping and have traced him to this house. I believe he is in this room.”

While the man was speaking Chirp removed one hand from Regie’s head and instantly covered the grapes with a corner of the sheet.

The officer paused as he looked around at the dumbfounded group.

“Which is the thief ?” he said.

No one spoke; no one moved.

Then the officer spoke again: “Well, if you will not point out the thief, I must arrest you all and the judge will find a way of getting him.”

Regie made a motion as if to rise, but the little hand on his head, almost weightless and strengthless as it was, held him down as though its power was irresistible.

The officer’s eyes wandered over the group until they fell on Chirp.

The poor little pinched pale face was very pale. That had no effect on the officer, for he was used to seeing pinched, pale faces every day, but the great black eyes of the dying child had a wistful, pleading look which fairly glowed.

He was fascinated by it; he could not remove his eyes. He was almost frightened. It seemed supernatural.

The little creature raised her hand as if to stay the officer; her lips moved once or twice as if trying to speak. Then with a great effort she said, speaking very slowly and laboriously, "Mr. Officer, please don't arrest anybody. I am a very sick girl and very naughty. I—I wanted some grapes. Oh, I wanted them so bad. I couldn't help it, Mr. Officer, I really couldn't. I know it's wrong, but I did try not to talk about them, but my mouth wanted them so much and I couldn't help it—I truly couldn't."

"And Re——" she nearly said Regie, but she stopped with an alarmed look, then said—"I mean somebody got me some grapes."

Her eyes filled with tears as she burst out with childish grief, "It's too late now, I—I can't eat them."

She raised her hand slowly to her face and wiped away the tears, then her face and eyes again assumed their eager pleading look as she said:

"I am the thief, Mr. Officer, arrest me. I am the one the grapes were stolen for, take me—don't arrest anybody else. I am a poor sick little girl; I can't

work any more. I am no use, please arrest me; don't arrest the others 'cause I'm the one you want."

Her voice had grown weaker and weaker until it had tapered off into a whisper; her eyes closed and she lay exhausted.

Every one in the room was crying and the tears were rolling down the officer's cheeks. He dashed them away as he said in a voice broken with emotion:

"I—I think I've made a mistake—perhaps the man who took the grapes—is—somewhere else. If I find him I will have to arrest him." This was said to those standing around the bed. He added, "If you see him—God bless him," in a low tone, then aloud, "bring him to the station. Good-by, little one," he said to Chirp. "You are a brave little girl; get well as quick as you can and if ever you want grapes again, come to me and I will give you all you can carry."

He kissed her on the forehead and marched out of the room.

Chirp closed her eyes with a satisfied sigh; she moved slightly once or twice; she slowly lifted her eyelids as if they were very heavy—too heavy for her to hold them open; they closed again. She smiled and her lips moved.

"What is it, darling?" said her mother, bending over her; "what did you say, darling?"

The little face was now radiant with happiness as

a whisper came to her mother's ear like the coo of a dove.

"I'm having a beautiful rest."

The heavy eyelids opened again and the big eyes rolled around the room until they had rested on every one present. Then the lids fell together again.

There was another sigh—the little hand slipped from Regie's head—a slight quiver of the body and this poor little slave was taken from the toil and sorrow of this sad world.

The doctor started forward, felt her pulse, bent over her and listened for her heart-beat. He arose and turning away buried his face in his hands.

The little heroine was dead.

CHAPTER XXII.

LEON BECOMES AN OUTLAW.

AFTER the death of Chirp, Leon was utterly prostrated; he could hardly realize that she was dead; he could not understand that he was never to see her again; he did not know she had taken such a deep root in his affections and could not understand how she could die. Parting with her seemed like tearing off a limb; he had never in all his selfish life of self-indolence known what it was to suffer a loss the annoyance of which lasted over night.

But the taking away of this sweet little child cast a deep gloom over his life; he felt as though the sun was buried in black clouds; in an unreasoning way, he was inclined to blame everybody for her death—her father, her mother, and even the doctor.

While in his gloomiest mood he met the doctor and accosting him in a brusque manner, said:

“Yours is a fine profession that couldn’t save the life of a child like Chirp.” Then he added bitterly, “you are all humbugs and quacks.”

The doctor bit his lips to keep back an angry retort, but he answered in a mild tone: “Poor Chirp was a sensitive child with a vast amount of nervous

energy, but she had no real strength. Under other conditions she would have grown up a strong, healthy girl, but she died of over-work; in fact she was tired out, she was exhausted because, like thousands of other children, she was put to work before she was able to perform it properly."

Leon could not answer the doctor further than to admit the force of his remarks. A little reflection showed him that as the family was circumstanced it was necessary for every member to work to keep a roof over their head and to supply food.

The father was beyond middle life and almost worn out with hard work and exposure; his pay was very small and although he struggled desperately to do as much work as other men, he felt that he was baffled by his weight of years.

The company graded the men according to their years and their ability to work. There was a boy's yard, a young men's yard, a middle aged men's yard and an old men's yard. There was also what was known as a workhouse where incompetent old men and women were put when unable to support themselves. This was the dread of the aged, as it was well known that privation, starvation, neglect and cruelty was the lot of the unfortunates who were committed to this asylum.

To keep out of this place as long as possible (for no one could hope to escape it) was the ambition of men and women as they neared the middle age.

Mr. Waldo struggled manfully; his sight, hearing and strength were impaired, but he strove by every art to conceal the effect of advancing years. It was pitiable to see him try to keep up with the young men when strength or agility became necessary. Oftentimes in his efforts to move quickly, his movements were so grotesque as to cause his companions and even the overseers to smile, especially as his comical movements were accompanied by the utmost gravity and anxiety of countenance. When an order was given, if he did not hear it perfectly he would watch and follow his neighbor's example and generally with the awkwardness of imitation. Sometimes the men laughed at him; sometimes in pity they helped him out; he was the oldest man in his gang, and to their credit be it said, to most of the men the sight of this old man trying to fight off and hide the effects of advancing years was an inexpressibly sad one. It was a sight which impressed the beholders as partaking largely of the elements which make heroes.

In spite of his failing faculties, the old man had fought on, holding his own when younger and stronger men were forced into the old man's gang (for the labor and privation wore men out quickly).

But now poor Chirp seemed to have taken with her to her grave all of her father's energy and ambition. Leon was obliged to urge him to go to work.

"What is the use?" he said in reply to Leon's urg-

ing; "it is work, work, work and nothing for it,—nothing—nothing," and the old man shook his head in a hopeless way.

"But your wife must be considered," said Leon.

"Yes, I must work for her; she has worked by my side steadily and faithfully for twenty-five years and I must work for her and I must live for her sake."

He did go to work, but he was in no condition for labor. He was spoken to more than once by the overseer for stopping work and gazing about him in an absent-minded way. One evening about six o'clock he stopped work and stood gazing into vacancy. The overseer (a brutal fellow) struck him with his scorpion. It was a vicious blow and the old man fell to the ground with a piteous groan.

"Get up, you lazy brute," said the overseer, and at the same time he plied his scorpion about the old man's head and shoulders; the old man tried to shield his face and eyes by covering them with his arms and hands, but the blows came thick and fast and cut him terribly.

Leon was working close by. He stood for a moment irresolute. He well knew that to interfere in what was called the discipline of the yard, would bring upon him the severest punishment; but as the lash fell, cutting in such a cruel manner the head, face and hands of the old man, he forgot everything else in his indignation and sprang forward crying:

“You are a coward to strike that old man.”

He snatched the scorpion from the overseer's hand and knocked him down; then he lashed him vigorously.

“Take that! you scoundrel! you coward! you brute!” he cried, while the overseer struggled to get away, but Leon followed him up and lashed him until the fellow's face and hands were covered with blood and his clothes were cut to ribbons.

Several of the workmen witnessed the scene. They were awed by Leon's temerity; they neither helped nor hindered him—they simply looked on with horror; they thought of him as a man who had virtually committed suicide; they believed nothing could save him from the awful penalty visited on those who struck their overseers.

As he paused for breath, one of the men brushed by him and said, “Run for your life. The other overseers will be here in a moment—quick, go!”

“What is this?” cried a voice as two of the overseers came running towards Leon.

They were within about twenty-five feet of where he was standing—“Go! run!” said several of the men in a whisper. Leon saw his danger and turning, ran down one of the alleys of brick. The bricks were heaped up in such a way as to leave lanes and alleys of different widths.

As Leon turned to run, one of the overseers cried, “Halt!”

Leon paid no attention to the command. Then the overseer blew a signal whistle; this was followed by whistles from half a dozen different directions.

As Leon ran, a number of the laborers followed him and kept between him and his pursuers. At the first cross alley another overseer joined in the chase, then another and another, until there were at least ten in pursuit.

It was almost dark now, but as Leon turned into a side alley he saw one of the overseers standing directly in his path.

"Halt!" called the overseer as Leon came in sight. The only response was a brick which came flying over Leon's head and struck the overseer in the chest; he sank down in a heap.

In a moment Leon and the crowd were trampling over him. Another overseer dashed out of one of the cross alleys. He was fresh and ran like a deer. He was gaining rapidly on Leon when the laborer just in front of him intentionally tripped and fell; the overseer fell headlong over him. This gave Leon a little advantage.

It had grown almost dark now and Leon was beginning to feel exhausted. He was about to stop when one of the laborers just behind him said in a low tone, "turn to the left at the next alley and we will lead them straight on. Do you understand? To the left."

"Yes," panted Leon, "where then?"

“Over the low wall to the street and then cross the river,” said the laborer.

Then he added in a whisper, when they had gone a little farther, “Turn here, turn down here. Don’t let them hear you. Now! quick! go!”

Leon turned down a dark alley and as he ran he heard the crowd running up the alley he had just left.

After running for about three minutes he came to a low wall. He climbed over and found himself in the street. He looked up and down, but could see nothing, so after a moment’s consideration he turned to the left and tumbling about in the darkness for some minutes, he saw the glimmering of the waves of the river, and in a few seconds he found himself on one of the city docks.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFRAID OF HIS FELLOW-MEN.

LEON knew he dare not stay in the city, so he set about devising some means of crossing the river. He could hear the shouting and whistling of his pursuers in the distance. Well he knew it would not be long before the hoard of overseers would be swarming out into the street after him like a pack of bloodhounds.

Panting as he was, he peered cautiously over into the river to see if he could not find a boat with which he might ferry himself over to the other shore. To his delight he saw at the end of the dock a small boat. He started towards it and was stepping over the string piece of the dock to drop into it, when he felt a hand grip his collar; in a moment he was pulled back on to the pier.

“Who are, and where are you going?” were the words which saluted Leon’s ears. The poor fellow gave himself up for lost. He didn’t answer, because he could not; the grip on his collar almost choked him and he was exerting all his faculties to get into a position where he could breathe and at the same time see who had hold of him.

When a man gets a grip on the collar of another, he has an extraordinary advantage; the person who is collared is utterly helpless. It is annoying—it is irritating—it is painful and humiliating; with a grip upon his collar a man feels as though he were in a pillory, the person having the grip has complete mastery over him and can turn or twist him at will, while the victim helplessly beats the air. Such was Leon's position.

He gasped and struggled as he tried to free his throat and turn his head to see his captor. Greatly to his surprise, after a moment's struggle, he felt himself released and whirled round and brought face to face with a man of massive proportions.

"Well," said the man, in a mighty voice, "who are you and where are you going?"

Leon made an effort to recover his breath; then he said in an agitated voice, "I—I want to cross the river."

"What for?"

"I want to visit some friends in Ocio."

"Who are they?"

Leon did not answer.

"Who are you?"

Leon did not answer.

"Where are you from?"

Leon knew now that he could not escape by deception, so he determined to tell the stranger all and appeal to him for mercy. This was his only hope,

and there, in the darkness by the river side he told his captor of the death of Chirp and its sad effect on her father, of the brutality of the keeper and of his defence of the old man; of his escape. "And now," he said as he finished his story, "I suppose you will give me up and I will be condemned to death."

The man looked keenly at Leon for a moment and said:

"What were you going to do over the river?"

"I had no plans except to escape," said Leon.

"If they see you wandering there they will bring you back."

"I don't know what to do," said Leon; "I suppose I must give myself up."

"I suppose you must——" here the man paused, "but it seems hard, everything is hard though," he added; then he looked into Leon's face sharply.

"Tell me," he said, "did any one see you come here?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, certain."

A faint hope came into Leon's heart and warmed it as he cried out:

"You don't want to give a fellow up, do you? You don't want to see me killed. I never did you any harm and I never did any one harm. I want to live, I don't want to be put to death. Won't you help me to escape?"

As he said this, Leon stretched out his hands imploringly.

“If I help you to escape, it would be death to me if it was found out,” said the man.

Leon gave a groan.

The man said to himself: “I am not a bloodhound.” Then he added suddenly as he faced Leon, “Say, young man, there is a skiff at the third pier from this and a pair of oars under the pier,” he paused—then he continued, “about seventy miles down the coast there is a sort of station where smugglers land. If I were going to that station I would travel inland for a short distance and then go south. I would not travel near the shore until I got a good distance south; it is dangerous. I would not travel in the daytime until I got a good way from the city; that is dangerous.”

Leon burst out with a profusion of thanks.

“Stop that!” said the man. “I have got to go to the other side of this pier; when I come back I will take you to the lock-up.”

Leon looked at him inquiringly.

The man turned to go—paused for a second, faced Leon again as he said in a voice so savage that it made Leon tremble,

“Do you understand?” And turning on his heel he walked away.

Leon looked at him a moment and then said fervently:

"God bless you." He then ran down the dock as fast as he could.

Fortunately he did not meet anybody else and he had very little difficulty in finding the skiff and the oars.

Both the skiff and the oars were pretty well worn out, but he managed to row himself across the river; he was very careful to avoid people as he landed. Luckily he had a few cents in his pocket, so he went into a little store on the outskirts of the city and bought some crackers.

He imagined that the woman who served him looked at him suspiciously and he made up his mind that he must avoid observation.

Leaving the city he struck across the meadows. It was a very chilly autumn evening and as he was poorly clad, the wind whistled around him in a way that made him shiver. He struck up a pretty rapid gait and travelled all night.

It was a hard, dreary walk, and nothing but the dread of capture kept him moving. How the poor fellow yearned for a place to lay his head and a hearth to warm himself by as he stumbled along.

As he passed farm-house after farm-house, and saw the lights in the windows, he could not help envying the people inside.

Once as he crossed a road where the wind whistled round him and chilled him through, he felt that he must give up, and he went up to a window of a farm

house and looked in. There was a great, big fire blazing on the hearth and the family were at supper. Everything looked warm and comfortable to the famished boy. The sight almost maddened him and he was about to knock on the door when he heard a dog give a fierce growl. This brought him to his senses and he continued on until dawn. Then he became anxious to get under cover, and he began to look around for a place to hide. He saw a barn which looked inviting, but as he approached it a dog began to bark and he fled precipitately.

At a short distance beyond he saw another outbuilding, but there was nothing in it but some farm implements and he feared that the agriculturists would come for them and discover him. Going out, to his horror, he saw a man approaching; he had never before in his life thought he could have such a feeling of fear come over him at the sight of a human being. Then it was that he felt he was an outcast—a creature whom every one was bound to pursue to his death. He felt that his most deadly enemies were his fellow-men and that he must avoid them as he would a noisome pestilence. Then there came over him a feeling of desolation and loneliness which almost made him lose his senses and he experienced a horrible sinking at heart which made him ill. He gazed at the man with a sort of fascination and horror; the man as yet was a long distance away, but was approaching.

Leon dropped on all fours to avoid observation.

"Where can I hide?" he cried in agony. He looked around in various directions and his eye fell on a haystack some distance off in the rear of the out-building. He crept to its far side and then proceeded to burrow his way into it. This was not an easy task, but fear lent him energy and he worked vigorously until he finally succeeded in getting completely under cover.

He managed to work himself into such a position that he could look out over the field. He was very hungry and happily he had a few crackers left. He ate them; they left his throat parched and dry. He would have given almost anything for a drink.

He was tantalized by seeing a brook trickling by his hiding place scarce ten feet away. He lay thus, suffering from thirst until he could stand it no longer; then carefully looking around he crept out and kneeling down by the stream, took a good, long draught.

After going back into the haystack, he felt so drowsy from his long tramp that he fell into an uneasy sleep. When he awoke it was quite dark. He left his shelter, feeling very stiff and sore and resumed his journey.

After a while the exercise brought his blood into circulation, enabling him to move more freely. He was very hungry, but he walked as well as he could

all through the night—once in a while stumbling and falling from sheer weariness.

When morning broke he hid under another haystack; his stomach was clamorous, but after a time weariness overcame him and he again fell into an uneasy sleep.

At about noon he was awakened by the sound of voices. Peering through the side of the haystack, he saw three men sitting on the ground. They were evidently laborers who were eating their dinner.

Poor Leon's hunger seemed to increase tenfold as he saw them swallow mouthful after mouthful. He felt an insane desire to go out and beg for some food. His hunger was so fierce that he determined to risk being arrested and was working his way out when he heard three sharp whistles. They were the overseer's signals. He knew them well and he shuddered as he heard them. He almost felt the dreadful scorpion about his shoulders, and he lay still almost holding his breath.

The men sprang to their feet and scurried away to their work in an adjoining field. To Leon's delight they left some food behind them; it was only three or four fragments of fried corn meal, but he almost laughed for joy as he saw it. He looked carefully around and seeing that the coast was clear, he was again working out of the haystack when he saw two large dogs running about in the field.

This was a new peril and Leon shrank back. The

dogs were evidently playing—they chased each other up and down and around the field; suddenly one of them started at full speed toward Leon's place of shelter; the other dog followed. They passed Leon's hiding place like a shot, but in a moment they came running back and right up to the place where the men had left the food.

They swallowed it in a moment and looked around for more; then to Leon's horror they began sniffing around his hiding place; he almost gave himself up for lost, for at the same moment he saw a fierce-looking overseer walking across the field swinging his scorpion in his hand; happily for Leon he was going in an opposite direction from his hiding place, but turning and seeing the dogs he called to them. They were well-trained brutes and responded to his call on the instant.

Poor Leon did not know what to do; he was suffering most horribly from hunger, and as he lay in his hiding place the rest of the day, he made up his mind that he would take desperate chances to get a mouthful of food.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“I ONLY WANTED SOMETHING TO EAT.”

It was the custom among the directors of the company to have numerous rural cottages and villas. Some had half a dozen, others had more, scattered about the country.

They were always located in the most beautiful sections and had the most charming surroundings.

About sixty miles from Pactolus, General Sinclair had one of those beautiful summer cottages and in this most delightful place he had installed Lizzie for a portion of the summer and fall. Lizzie was as pretty and fascinating as ever.

A number of the general's friends were spending a few of the autumnal days at this cottage and Lizzie presided with the grace of a duchess, as some of the guests observed.

One morning important business called the general to the city and the task of entertaining the guests fell entirely upon Lizzie.

The Indian summer had just set in, and as usual the weather was charming. Lizzie promised the guests a novelty in the way of lunch and she set to work with a will to fulfil her promise. She insisted on being allowed to carry out her idea unaided.

There was a grove to the left of the house and here she proposed to have what she called an open-air autumnal lunch. Tables were carried out and all sorts of delicacies heaped upon them.

Lizzie in a dazzling fall costume was beautifying the tables with autumn leaves. She looked the embodiment of happiness as she moved about humming a tune and giving coquettish touches to this or that part of the tables.

The servants had gone to the house and she was alone, when suddenly she heard a noise almost beside her; she turned and saw a most horrible-looking object. A pale, gaunt man, with fierce, gleaming eyes stood beside her. He had a cloth tied round his head and his clothes were in rags.

The poor girl shuddered with horror as she saw him.

"I want something to eat!" he said in a hoarse voice, and he dashed to the table and seized a bird.

Lizzie screamed with terror. One of the guests who happened to be close at hand, rushed up just in time to catch the fellow by the throat and hurl him to the ground.

This guest was a gallant man and was pleased to have an opportunity of rescuing the beautiful girl from the horrible monster, and he proceeded to lash the prostrate man in the most gallant manner. Two other gallant men joined him almost instantly and they assisted him in the fierce onslaught.

It did not seem to make any difference to these heroes that the creature they were cutting with their scorpions was a physical wreck, was lying helpless on the ground and that he was incapable of resistance or harm. That fact seemed to lend them courage.

These men would doubtless have beaten the poor wretch to death had not Lizzie recovered from her fright, and comprehending the needless brutality of her champions' conduct rushed forward, crying:

"Stop! aren't you ashamed of yourselves to beat a poor wretch when he is helpless?"

They paused abashed, while Lizzie stooped over the now insensible man.

"Give me some wine," she said.

They handed a glass of wine to her and she forced a spoonful of it into the mouth of the insensible man.

Leon (for it was he) gave a groan as he recovered consciousness. As he opened his eyes they lighted on the beautiful woman who was kneeling beside him.

He muttered something in a feeble way as his eyes closed again.

"What is it?" said Lizzie, whose timidity had vanished; "what did you say?"

The poor fellow again languidly opened his eyes, as he said,

"I—I only wanted something to eat. I—couldn't hurt you."

"Poor fellow," said Lizzie.

"Don't—please don't—don't let them—beat me;" and he looked imploringly at her.

Lizzie's eyes filled with tears.

"Don't be afraid; no one shall touch you and you shall have all you want to eat. Here, John," she said to a servant, "help him into the house and see that he has everything he wants."

Leon was so weak that he had to be carried into the house. After he had gone, one of the guests said to Lizzie:

"Now you have done a very foolish thing; this man may be a fugitive laborer or a criminal and it is dangerous to harbor him."

"I don't care what he is," said Lizzie, "he is a man too weak to defend himself and unable to take care of himself, and I shall succor him to the best of my ability."

The guest gave up further discussion of the matter and the whole party sat down and made merry over their lunch.

Poor Leon needed more than food and drink; he needed a doctor's care. That night he was delirious. He was installed in one of the small houses which were occupied by the servants and received every attention.

It was more than three weeks before he could sit up. He then told Lizzie of his escape from the brick yard; he wanted to tell the history of his life,

but incidentally he learned that he was on his guardian's premises and he wisely refrained.

Lizzie said that she would see that he was not punished for his overt act in the brick yard and offered to send him elsewhere if he wished. She said she would send him either south or west if he desired, but the pleasant way in which he had been living while in Lizzie's care revived within him a desire to get back his property and for that purpose he knew he must be in the city near his lawyer and so he said he would go back to Pactolus.

When Sinclair heard that Lizzie was nursing a laborer he simply gave a helpless shrug of his shoulders and said:

"It is like her," and when she asked him for an order remitting any punishment Leon was liable to suffer, he signed the order with the remark that she would demoralize the whole labor force in one week if she had her way.

The next week Leon was back in the city, but was placed in another brick yard.

Shortly after that he learned that poor old Mr. Waldo had been sent to the workhouse.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BUILDING OF SINCLAIR'S PALACE.

THERE was one episode in Leon's servitude (for it was nothing else) which was as bitter an experience as ever falls to the lot of man.

General Sinclair was building a house or rather a palace, which was to be the handsomest of all the grand houses in the city. It had been progressing rather slowly and he had grown impatient. "Put on more men," he said to the superintendent.

"Where will I get them?" the superintendent asked.

"Draw them from the public works and from the brick yards and see that you draw enough men to rush the building through."

The superintendent followed the general's directions and the working force was largely augmented.

Among those drafted to assist in the work was Leon, and, much to his disgust, he was assigned the task of carrying mortar in a hod. That he did not like the work it is needless to say, but from his experience in the brick yard, he concluded that it was wise not even to demur; still he would often gnash his teeth as he thought of the life of luxury which

had been his and compared it with his present hard lot.

Sometimes he thought of Millicent and wondered if she ever thought of him. Sometimes he thought she was heartless not to seek him out or intercede for him. Sometimes he would cry out in agony:

"If Millicent could see me now, she would pity me;" but as day by day of monotonous toil passed he almost ceased to think of her, and, like the rest of the laborers, thought only how he could secure as much food and rest as possible.

One warm morning in the early spring, General Sinclair said to Millicent, "How would you like to go with me to see our new house?"

"I should be delighted," said Millicent; "can I take Grace with me?"

"Yes," said the general; "certainly."

"When will you go?" said Millicent.

"This afternoon if you like," said her father; "call for me at the directory office and we will drive over."

That afternoon the mechanics and laborers were surprised at the unusual sight of two beautiful ladies with the general inspecting the building. The party were clad in the freshest, coolest and prettiest of spring raiment. Their clothing stood out in beautiful contrast to the rusty, toil-stained garments of the workmen.

As the party were standing at one of the towers

a string of laborers carrying hods of mortar on their shoulders came round the corner.

Leon, almost exhausted with the work and heat, was third in the line and as he turned the corner his eye fell on the group and centred on Millicent. Her eyes met his at the same instant. Leon's heart leaped in a way that almost suffocated him; his strength left him in a moment and the hod of mortar fell from his shoulder. As it fell the contents were splashed on the clothing of the general and the young ladies.

Grace jumped back quickly, but Millicent stood transfixed, and as the general pulled her back she staggered and would have fallen had he not caught her in his arms. She quickly recovered, however, and gazed at Leon in a puzzled, dazed sort of way.

"Clumsy brute," shouted Sinclair, then turning to the overseer, he said: "String him up and tear the stupidity out of him."

"No, no, pa, don't whip him, he couldn't help it," cried Millicent.

"String him up and thrash him! Where are the overseers?" (looking round in a rage) "Where are they? They can never be found when they are wanted."

Two overseers came breaking through the crowd of laborers who surrounded the party. They plied their scorpions right and left and the laborers scattered like leaves.

"String that fellow up and thrash the stupidity out of him," shouted the general.

"No, pa; no, don't," pleaded Millicent.

Her father made an impatient gesture to the overseers, and in a moment Leon's hands were fastened together at the wrist, the ends of the cords were fastened over a piece of the scaffolding and Leon stood helpless with his back to the party.

One of the overseers tore the clothing off his back and prepared to strike.

"Pa," cried Millicent, "don't!"

"Be quiet, Millicent," said her father through his clinched teeth and at the same time he seized her wrist.

Then the lash came down on Leon's back, leaving a livid mark the shape of a comet.

Leon gave a gasp of pain.

"Stop!" screamed Millicent. "Stop!" she broke from her father and threw her arms on Leon's shoulders covering his back with her own body, at the same instant down came the lash on the girl's shoulders. The dress she wore was of a thin, transparent material, and a red mark left by the blow was visible on her shoulder. She shuddered and writhed, but uttered no sound.

The overseers paused horrified; they looked at Sinclair; he was white with rage.

"Go on," he shouted, "go on! strike, I say!"

The overseer again brought the lash down on the

girl's shoulders,—again the girl writhed and shuddered, but uttered no other sound.

To what length Sinclair would have gone it is impossible to say, had not Grace, who was so astonished as scarcely to be able to move, recovered sufficiently to comprehend what was going on. She gave a scream when she saw the blood streaming down Millicent's back, and rushed at Sinclair, crying, "Stop—stop—you brute! you coward! you wretch! you shall pay for this outrage." This brought Sinclair to his senses like the tap of a drum.

"Millicent," he said in a soft voice, "you must not interfere with the discipline."

Grace went up to Millicent and assisted her to a seat on a block of stone.

"Release that man!" said Grace.

The overseers looked at Sinclair for instructions. He said nothing and they cut the cords.

When Leon turned round, his face was deathly pale.

"We will attend to you by-and-by," said Sinclair.

"You shall not touch him," said Millicent, in a tone of forced calmness.

"Millicent," said Sinclair, "you forget yourself."

"You have forgotten yourself, sir," she said without looking at him.

At that moment a carriage was passing and Grace called to its occupant:

“Mr. Reed—Mr. Reed.”

The carriage stopped and Col. Reed got out. Grace in a few words explained the situation.

“Now, Mr. Reed,” she said, “Millicent is going home with me; will you take us in your carriage?”

“If Miss Millicent desires it,” said Mr. Reed, “I will with pleasure.”

“I do,” said Millicent, as she rose with an effort, “and I want to take this young man under my protection; can he go with us now?”

Col. Reed looked at Leon in a puzzled way for a moment, then he said:

“Ah!”—he paused for a moment, then continued, “He certainly can.”

Sinclair looked alarmed.

“Are you aware, sir,” said he turning to Mr. Reed, “that you are interfering with the discipline of one of the industrial branches?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Reed, “and I will take the responsibility of your daughter’s act if you are not man enough to do it.”

With that he helped the ladies into the carriage. He motioned to Leon to take a place beside the coachman and the carriage rolled off.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“WHY DIDN’T I SPEAK TO HER?”

WHAT to do with Leon was a problem which perplexed Millicent as they drove along. She was going to Grace’s and could not offer him an asylum there. Even if Grace were willing to take him, her father might return him to Sinclair.

Her mind was in a chaotic state owing to the pain she had suffered as well as the indignity to which she had been subjected.

What were her feelings toward Leon? She hardly knew. She felt that he was entitled to no consideration at her hands. He had slighted her and had been untrue to her. He has squandered his fortune in gambling and loose living and was now reaping the consequences of his folly.

Did he not merit his punishment? Had he not brought it on himself? And why should she interfere? These thoughts rushed angrily through her mind. Then the memory of his old-time kindness came to her like a picture; these memories dimmed her eyes with tears and his misdeeds were submerged in a flood of sympathy.

Still she could not tell what to do with him. One

thing was certain; she would protect him to the full extent of her ability so far as to prevent his being taken back among the laborers and to his punishment.

That was as far as she would go. It was as far as she could go.

She had not rejected him, but he had slighted her in the most insulting manner. She was under no obligation to speak to him even.

Suddenly the silence was broken by Mr. Reed:

"What shall we do with him?" indicating Leon with his thumb.

"He will stay at our home," said Grace impulsively, "until his wounds are dressed."

"But," faltered Millicent, "what will your father say?"

"What do I care what he may say," cried Grace indignantly. "He has been cruelly treated. He is suffering. He needs protection and I will protect him."

Millicent could not resist the temptation of throwing her arms around Grace and kissing her, but she could not control a little scream of pain as the movement caused her wounded shoulders to bleed afresh.

Arrived at the house, Mr. Reed said: "Now, I will look after this young man and will call for him tomorrow. In the mean time your physician will dress his wounded shoulder."

Reed then helped the ladies to alight, spoke to the steward in relation to Leon, and drove off.

There was one or more physicians attached to the household of each member of the directory and the wounds were dressed in a few moments.

The wounds were painful and ugly in appearance (the flesh being torn rather than cut by the twisted wire of the scorpion lash), but the doctor said cheerfully that they would heal up in a very short time.

“Will it leave a mark, doctor?” said Millicent.

The doctor shook his head and said: “I will do my best with it and it may come out all right.”

Leon was assigned to a room in the servants' quarters. He was told by the steward that he might walk in the garden, but that he must not leave the premises.

This he had no wish to do, especially as he had a comfortable bed and better food than he was used to.

He no longer felt the promptings of pride nor did he even feel a desire to tax Millicent with unfaithfulness.

There were times when he was so angry at her for her desertion of him that he would have scorned any friendly offer at her hands, but, now, he was a changed man.

Hope deferred, disappointment, hard work, brutal treatment and hunger had so broken his spirit that he was ready to accept anything from anybody.

After as comfortable a night's rest as he could expect with his wounded back, he arose in the morning and borrowing some needles and thread from one of the servants, he repaired his laborer's dress (for he had learned to be his own tailor).

After eating the best breakfast he had eaten since he had left Lizzie's care, he went out into the garden. It was very large and well supplied with flowers, shade trees and shrubs.

As he slowly walked down a shady path there came out of a side path what appeared to be an illusion of light blue and white.

Leon stopped and as his eye became accustomed to the light and color, he recognized Millicent clad in a wrapper of light blue silk combined with white lace. She was but five feet from him.

Their eyes met at the same moment.

Leon was still handsome despite his homely garb. She, though rather pale, was radiantly beautiful.

Again Leon felt that bursting feeling in his throat which almost strangled him.

Millicent stood like one transfixed. She could not utter a word. Each believed the other to be conscious of a broken vow.

They gazed at each other for more than a minute; it seemed an age.

Leon tried to speak, but his throat was dry, his tongue was dry, the fountain of speech was dry. They gazed at one another and every nerve tingled

until they could bear the agony no longer and then Leon by an effort turned slowly and walked quickly away.

Millicent tottered a few steps and sank into a garden seat.

At the other end of the path Leon met the steward. "Col. Reed has sent for you," he said; "come this way."

Leon followed as if he were asleep and got into a wagon with two men and was driven away. He did not know or care where.

He was thinking—thinking—thinking, he could not say of what. His mind was full of the bright vision he had just seen.

"Why didn't I speak to her? Why should I? What would I have said? What should I have said? Why didn't she speak to me?"

"She had deserted me in my misery," he said bitterly. "Her interference in my behalf was only momentary, and she will let me go back to slavery. Yes, and to my punishment which will be worse than ever."

Then the material element in his condition obtruded itself

He would again be starved and worked perhaps to death.

Why did he not beg her to help him—to assist him in any way—anything to keep from the slavery? Why did he not appeal to her to take him into her

house as a servant in any capacity? He framed speeches which he could have made to her—speeches which he was sure would have moved her to look kindly on him and help him.

Then he had a wild desire to jump out of the wagon, run to her and beg her to protect him. Then he thought she had changed—she did not care for him now. She had only cared for him when he was rich, and he shuddered as he thought perhaps she had been a party to her father's fraud in stripping him of his property.

Thus he thought and thought until his brain was in a whirl. The wagon stopped before a large house with a great wall around it.

At a signal, a small iron gate was opened and he was ushered in. His escorts spoke to a man in a sort of office and then left Leon in his charge.

Leon was escorted by an attendant to a long building in the enclosure and told he would occupy room thirty.

Leon merely glanced at the room, then wandered out into the air. He found a seat in a secluded spot and sat down with his face buried in his hands.

When Millicent recovered from her surprise at Leon's sudden departure, she started as if to follow him, then checked herself and walked towards the house.

Some time after she asked in a casual way of the doctor how Leon was getting on.

"He has been taken away," said the doctor.

Millicent started: "What!" she said. "By whom?"

"An order came for him signed by Mr. Reed."

"Where have they taken him?"

"To Mr. Reed's garden house," replied the doctor.

"One of the men said that was where they were ordered to leave him."

"What for?"

"I don't know," replied the doctor.

Then Millicent was tormented with the idea that her father might get hold of him again. That she knew would be almost equivalent to death.

What should she do? She rushed up-stairs to Grace's room.

"Grace, Grace!" she called; "they have taken him away."

"Who is taken away?" said Grace languidly, laying down a book she was reading.

"Le—I mean the man who was whipped. What shall we do?"

Then Millicent explained the situation of affairs to Grace.

"Why," said Grace, "we will drive to Mr. Reed's garden house and find out."

And they did; but on their way they met Mr. Reed and he explained that he would take charge of Leon and see that he was protected from all harm.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RETURNED FROM SLAVERY.

LEON had been at Mr. Reed's house for two days when the steward sent for him.

Leon presented himself at the office; the steward simply glanced at him for a moment, and then said :

"A suit of clothes has been sent to your room; you'll put it on at once and hold yourself in readiness to leave here when notified."

"Where do I go?" asked Leon.

"I don't know," replied the steward.

"Am I sent away by Mr. Reed's orders?"

"I answer no further questions," said the steward, "and if you know what is good for you, you'll ask none; now go."

Leon went directly to his room, and there found a complete outfit of clothing. It was almost as good as the suit he had discarded many months before when he put on his laborer's clothing.

The next morning he was summoned by the steward and told to accompany a man who was standing in the hall. He glanced at the man and then at the steward and was about to ask a question when the steward waved him off, saying:

"It is useless to ask questions as I know nothing; you are to follow this man;" he then nodded to the man who turned to Leon, saying:

"Are you ready?" Leon hesitated a moment and glanced at the steward, and recognizing the fact that it was idle to object, replied:

"I am." The man opened the door and they passed out. Leon asked his companion several questions which he bluntly refused to answer. At last Leon said:

"Won't you tell me where you are taking me?"

"Well," said the man, "I suppose there is no harm in that, as you will know soon enough. I am taking you to the office of lawyer Hiton."

Leon's heart gave a great leap and he almost fell in a faint. Could it be possible that his case had been won? Was he about to be freed from slavery? Was he once more to live as a human being? Such thoughts made him feel so joyful that he could hardly keep from crying out and leaping.

After half an hour's walk through the lonely streets, Leon found himself in lawyer Hiton's office. That gentleman looked just about the same as when he had parted from him, and greeted Leon with great good humor:

"Well, my boy," he said, "how do you like being a laborer?"

"I don't like it," said Leon; "are you going to send me back again?"

"I don't think we can," said the lawyer.

"Thank God," said Leon, fervently. And the lawyer went on:

"Sinclair now knows of your being a laborer, and you would not be safe in any of the company's yards."

"Well, what are you going to do with me?"

Leon had reached a thoroughly humble state and he seemed to regard himself as a sort of chattel to be moved about at the pleasure of the lawyer.

"I hardly know," the lawyer replied; "but we must keep you out of Sinclair's reach or our cake will be dough; but never mind, we will do something."

The next question that Leon asked was the most important one and his breath came thick and fast as he spoke.

"How—how is the case?" This was said almost in a whisper, but the lawyer's smile was reassuring as he said:

"It is progressing very favorably. I think we can fix things all right. Yes, I am pretty sure we will," he added after a moment's pause. "I guess you will be tolerably safe; for any interference with you now, will rebound on Sinclair. Nothing he can do will prevent the case going on to a termination."

Then the lawyer turned to his desk, saying:

"You will stay at my house to-night and in the

mean time you can amuse yourself out there," pointing to the outer office.

Leon slept at Mr. Hiton's house that night. He occupied a beautiful room, slept in a comfortable bed and had a most bounteous and elaborate dinner. He once more began to feel like a human being.

The next day he went again to Hiton's office, and, talking with the clerks, learned of the progress his case was making; he could not understand many of the technical terms used by the clerks, but Mr. Hiton's confident manner and hearty way of speaking of it gave him courage.

Leon was an entirely different person from the careless individual who had sailed from Europe the year before; instead of being blasé and selfish, he was now thoughtful, considerate and alert; the hard life he had led as a laborer had strengthened his character and brought to the surface force and energy which neither he nor his friends ever dreamed of his possessing.

Mr. Hiton was surprised at shrewd suggestions which he made in regard to his case and oftentimes found him quite useful in consultation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“IS MISS HOLT IN?”

THE wounds on Millicent's shoulder healed up readily; but with the wound to her feelings the matter was different. To be struck with a scorpion was a terrible degradation. She continued to live with her friend Grace for some time after Leon was taken to Mr. Reed's.

Millicent resisted all the overtures which her father made to her to return home. All his requests and pleadings were of no avail. She had but one answer to all: “I have no desire to be again beaten with a scorpion.”

Her father's saying it was an accident and that it was unintentional, that he was beside himself and did not know what he was doing, made no impression on this high-spirited girl.

The only hope she would give him was that she might come back some time and live with him. But she would make no promise.

Her friend, Miss Grace Otis, and Mr. Otis were so indignant that they combated every suggestion on her part to return; moreover, she was for a long time undergoing a delicate surgical operation to prevent the cuts made by the scorpion leaving a scar.

Sinclair's fellow-directors heard of the assault on his daughter in more or less exaggerated form, and he was in a manner ostracized.

In their school days Millicent and Maud Holt were very great friends.

After leaving school Millicent was absent from the city a great deal and so the girls lost sight of each other.

After Mr. Holt lost his business and fortune, Maud, in a spirit of foolish pride, cut adrift from nearly all her old companions. She feared comment on her changed condition and she hated sympathy and so repelled all offers of aid or overtures of friendship.

Shortly after her father's arrest and imprisonment, she learned that Griffin had a man watching her.

She became frightened and one night she ran away from her home. She left a note saying that she could not let her brother and the doctor know where she was living, for if they came to see her, Griffin's men would follow them and find her retreat.

She wished them a heart-broken farewell and expressed a hope of seeing them again.

She rented a small room in a tenement and did what she could to support herself by sewing for her poor neighbors.

This was a most precarious way of living, for the people had very little money to pay for sewing.

In this room she made a noble fight for life and

honor, all the time hedged in by poverty in its most cruel forms.

Cold, hunger and loneliness. Sickness came also and then she sacrificed her pride.

She wrote a short note to Millicent asking her to call on her.

Millicent was delighted to hear from her old friend again and started out that same afternoon to find her.

The day was biting cold; when she reached the neighborhood of the directions given in the note, she was surprised to find it filled with poor tenements.

But Millicent was not the sort of a girl to be turned back or baffled by trifles, so she found the right number and was directed by a woman in the house to a room on the third floor. On reaching the door she knocked three times before she heard a voice asking her to come in.

She opened the door and saw the figure of a woman seated on a low stool in front of a stove. The woman was all huddled up.

Millicent was very nervous, and she said in a timid voice:

“Is Miss Holt in?”

The figure did not move.

Millicent paused and with beating heart repeated in a louder voice, “Is Miss Holt in?”

Still there was no response.

Suddenly a chill feeling of horror almost shook

Millicent's frame as the thought rushed into her mind that perhaps the huddled figure was dead.

She stood rooted to the spot, gazing with a fascinated horror at the form. How long she never knew.

A gust of wind came down the chimney with so much noise that it startled her and she gave a cry of alarm.

"What?" came a question from the figure, and at the same instant the figure (a young girl) stood up and turned towards Millicent.

The girls stared at each other in silence for a moment, then there was a flash of recognition.

"Maud!"

"Millie!"

And the girls were locked in each other's arms and then they both cried hysterically. When they became more calm they sat upon the side of the bed and talked.

Poor Maud was hollow-eyed and weak and as she sat beside her friend she told the sad story of her father's ruin; of the rapid decline of their fortune, of the assault on herself and her father's imprisonment, and she again asked eagerly the question she had asked her brother and her lover:

"Could I help it? Was it my fault?"

"Your fault?" cried Millicent. "Your fault? A thousand times No."

The answer came with such a burst of warmth, with such an unexpected glow of feeling, the first

warm or kindly word Maud had heard in months, that the girl looked puzzled or stupefied for a moment. This was followed by a glad look of intelligence; her face flushed for a second, but the reaction was too much for her strength; she became deadly pale and she sank back on the bed in a faint.

Millicent revived her after a few minutes and Maud told her that she had left her home to escape Griffin's officers. She had not dared to tell her brother or Dr. Clark where she lived, lest they should visit her and so be followed by the officers.

"But how have you lived since you have been here?" asked Millicent.

"Oh, I hardly know," she said in a weak, weary voice; "I did some sewing for some of the poor people around here and I made enough to eat, up to yesterday."

"What?" cried Millicent, "haven't you had anything to eat since yesterday?"

"No," said the girl, sadly.

"My goodness," said Millicent, "that won't do. Why, haven't you a fire?"

"Fuel is all used up."

"Here," said Millicent, "you get right into bed and I will get you food."

Maud had no choice but to yield. She submitted to being covered up in bed as if she were a child, and for the reason that now that she had some one to lean upon, some one to help her, the nerve

strength which had kept her up, deserted her and she lay helpless.

Millicent went out in haste and returned with two men carrying various kinds of food and a quantity of wood and coal.

One of the men made a fire and Millicent warmed some prepared soup and fed Maud with it.

The girl ate a few spoonfuls and then fell into a tired slumber.

“Poor girl,” said Millicent; “she seems to be exhausted. I will cook some meat for her.”

She could find neither a broiler nor frying pan, so she said, “I’ll see if I can borrow one.”

She went out and knocked at the next room door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BABY PILOT.

THERE was one matter which perplexed Leon in a way that almost amounted to torture. He could not understand how Millicent regarded him nor could he make up his mind how he should regard her.

Her father had robbed him of all he had and she was enjoying the fruits of the robbery. She had ceased to correspond with him without any reason.

It looked as if she were a party to the robbery, or at least condoned it.

If she did not approve of her father's conduct, why did she not intercede for him and protect his rights? Then the answer came: she did protect him with her own body and probably it was through her efforts that he was now restored to comparative comfort.

Thus he argued with himself back and forth until his head would ache and he would try to wrench himself from the subject by doing work or taking long walks.

Such was his state of mind one bitter cold afternoon when he walked out into the street to try to walk himself off the subject that was so near his heart.

He walked rapidly and in a short time found himself in the laborers' quarter.

The cold had driven people to their houses for shelter; there was scarcely a living creature to be seen.

Leon was hurrying along trying to study out some problem connected with his case which Hiton had called his attention to, when he slipped on a sheet of ice and down he went in a way that surprised him.

His hat flew off and the wind was driving it along the sidewalk when a queer little figure jumped out of a doorway and stopped it.

Leon scrambled to his feet as best he could and brushed the dust off his clothes.

As the little figure waddled up to him he could not repress a smile.

It was a boy of about four years of age, dressed in a most grotesque manner. He had on a man's blue woollen shirt which reached his heels. The sleeves hung down so that his hands were not visible. Around his waist a small yellow shawl was tied, while his head was tied up in a red scarf the ends of which were twined around his neck.

"Here is your hat, sir," he said as he tried to brush the dust off with the loose end of his sleeve.

"Well, my little man," said Leon, "where did you drop from?"

"I didn't drop, sir; I comed down-stairs."

"Oh, you comed down-stairs without dropping. I am the one that dropped, I guess," said Leon as he put his hand in his pocket to find a coin for the boy.

"Yes, sir," said the boy, agreeing with Leon.

"It is too cold for a little boy like you to be out in the street. Now, if I give you that," said Leon, showing the boy a silver coin, "will you go home and stay there?"

"No, sir," said the boy looking at the coin with wide-open eyes.

"You won't?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"'Cause I get somebody for mamma."

"Get somebody for mamma? Where is mamma?"

"Mamma can't get up, she sick," said the boy as his lip quivered and his eyes filled with tears.

He brushed the tears away with his sleeve, while Leon looked at him in a puzzled way.

"Where is your mamma?" he said.

"Up there," said the boy pointing to the next house; "she got nothing to eat."

"Come show me," said Leon, as he took the boy by the hand.

The boy led him to the door of a common tenement house.

"Up there," he said.

Leon took the boy in his arms and carried him up one flight of stairs.

"Does your mother live on this floor?"

"No, up."

Leon carried him up another flight.

"Here?" said Leon.

"No," said the boy. "Up."

Again they went up another flight.

"Any more?" said Leon.

"No," said the boy as he pointed to a door. Leon knocked twice. There was no sound from within.

"Open," said the boy.

Leon opened the door and walked into the room with the boy in his arms.

It was a bare cheerless room; its only furnishings were three chairs, a stove, a small table, and a bed in one corner. On the bed a woman was sleeping with her face to the wall.

The boy motioned to be let down.

Leon put him on the floor. He climbed on a chair which was by the head of the bed. He leaned over the bed and looked at the woman for a moment; then turning his head towards Leon he pulled up his right sleeve so as to uncover his right hand, and placed his index finger on his lips.

The attitude was so comical and the face was so earnest, that Leon could scarce keep from laughing outright, but he restrained himself and nodded to the boy, at the same time putting his finger to his own lips.

Leon stepped to the bed and looked at the woman.

She was thin and careworn.

"I won't wake her," he said; "I guess a little sleep will do her good."

He went to the fire to warm his hands; the fire was out.

"Here, this won't do," he said in a whisper; "that woman will freeze; we must have a fire. Where is the coal and wood?"

"No coal. No wood." The boy replied.

At that moment the woman awoke. She called "Harry, Harry, where are you?"

"Here I is," said the boy as he climbed into the bed.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW CHARITY MAY HELP A MAN IN HIS LOVE AFFAIRS.

THE woman seized him in her arms and hugged him convulsively.

"Thank God. Thank God," she cried, "thank God you are safe, my poor boy, my little boy. I thought they had taken you away from me, my sweet little boy."

She kissed him over and over again.

"Don't go away from your mother. Please don't, my darling boy, my sweet boy. Don't let them take you away. You are all I have left. If they take you away, it will break my heart," and the poor woman pressed him to her bosom.

She had not observed Leon, and as she repeated the words, "My poor boy, my darling," she again fell into a drowse.

Leon's eyes filled with tears as he heard the poor woman pleading, and a great lump came into his throat.

"Poor thing," he said as he wiped his eyes; then he added, "poor thing is all very well, but the first thing I had better do is to get some coal and wood. How is she off for provisions, I wonder?"

He tip-toed to the cupboard and looked in; there was nothing on the shelves but a few dishes and part of a loaf of bread.

He immediately left the room.

In about half an hour he returned with two men carrying a quantity of provisions and a basket of coal and wood.

Leon motioned to the men, they laid the baskets on the floor and departed.

Leon glanced at the woman, she was still dozing.

“Now,” he said, “the first thing to do is to make a fire. Hang it, why didn’t I think to have those fellows make it? Just my luck, I was always stupid. Well,” he said with a groan, “here goes.”

“Harry, Harry,” called the woman from the bed. Leon started and then said, “He is all right, ma’am. He’s a clever little fellow, a smart——”

The woman turned her face toward Leon in alarm.

“Who are you? What do you want?” she said in a frightened manner.

“I came here with your little boy to see how you were. I see you are not very well and I am going to make a fire for you.”

“You are very kind,” said the woman, “but there is no coal or wood.”

“Oh, yes, there is,” said Leon; “there it is.”

“Coal,” said the woman, looking at it in wonder, “where did it come from?”

Leon hated expressions of gratitude, so he said,

"A man just left it here—he was a large man with a dark beard. You haven't any relatives with dark beards, have you? Perhaps he was one."

The woman shook her head. "He must have made a mistake. It is for some of the other tenants," she said.

"No, no," said Leon hastily, "no mistake. There was another man with him, who left some meat and other knick-knacks. He said it was all right. And if it isn't all right, I'll make it all right."

"No, no," said the woman again, "I can't allow that. I cannot take charity."

Leon was nonplussed for a moment, then he burst out into a forced laugh.

"Charity?" he said. "Ha ha, this is not charity. If I pay for these things, I make you a loan—and I expect you to pay me."

"But I can't pay you."

"Oh, yes, you can. You are honest."

"But I may die."

Leon paused for a moment before he added, "Then speak a good word for me in heaven. That will wipe out the debt. But what nonsense to talk of dying."

At that moment the boy woke up and slid out of bed. He greeted Leon as an old friend.

"Ah, you are the boy I want," said Leon as he gave him a piece of candy, "now let us make the fire."

"You must not bother with the fire," said the woman hastily, "let me."

"Nonsense," said Leon, "you must not get up, it would kill you."

Leon in a clumsy manner proceeded to make a fire.

He then took a piece of beefsteak out of the basket and put it into the frying pan, and after many directions from the woman succeeded in frying it.

Leon then proceeded to unpack the basket which he had brought.

It contained a large assortment of goods and delicacies. There were several cans of prepared soup and jellies. There was also a bottle of port wine.

"Why, how singular," said Leon, "do you like soup, ma'am?"

"Yes," said the woman.

"Well, there are several cans of soup here. Let me see," and he read the directions on the can. "Put three tablespoonfuls in a pint of boiling water, and thicken with flour. Now, that's easy enough, isn't it?"

"Yes," said the woman.

Leon got a saucepan out of the closet and partly filled it with water, put it on the fire and watched it with great interest while waiting for it to boil. Occasionally he would put his finger into the water to see if it was getting hot. After what seemed to

him a long time, it did boil and he put in a good quantity of the prepared soup.

He took a spoon and tasted it once or twice but seemed dissatisfied with it.

He took up the can and again read the directions.

"That's the trouble," he said with a smile of relief, "I must thicken it with flour."

He had become rather warm with his work, and asked the woman's permission to take off his coat.

"Certainly," she said, "but you had better not bother you will get your clothes all spoiled."

"That reminds me," said Leon, and he took a paper out of his pocket, and made an apron of it, tying it on with a string.

He then took a handful of flour and dropped it into the boiling soup. To his horror it formed into round white lumps.

While he was looking ruefully at it, he put his hand reflectively to his face, leaving a smear of flour.

He was about to ask the woman what was the matter with the soup, when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," said the woman.

The door opened and in walked Millicent Sinclair. Never was man more astonished or horrified.

Here he was in the presence of the woman he loved after their long separation. He felt that he was in a position at once ridiculous and humiliating.

He would have given anything to have escaped unobserved.

In an instinctive effort to hide his face, he put his befloured hand to his head and smeared the whole side of his face and head.

He nervously picked up the frying pan, and walked toward the other side of the room.

"Excuse me," said Millicent, "a woman downstairs said you were sick."

"This gentleman has been very kind to me and my child," said the woman. "He got coal and wood and made a fire, and brought all these things. He said a man brought them. He's a man. God bless him. God bless him," and the woman sobbed.

Millicent put her handkerchief to her own eyes, while she put her hand sympathetically on the forehead of the woman. After a moment Millicent looked into the saucepan on the stove, "What is this in the saucepan?" she said.

"That's soup he is making for me," said the woman.

"I'm afraid, sir," said Millicent, "you have made a mistake here."

"Have I, miss?" said Leon trying to disguise his voice while he resolutely kept his back towards her. He held a big spoon in one hand and the frying-pan in the other.

Each moment he expected her to go, but she lingered.

"What are these white balls in the soup, sir?"

"I—I think that's flour—flour, miss, to—to thicken it, you know."

Millicent smiled. "Oh, flour! did you blend it?"

"Blend it?" said Leon in an awe-stricken voice.

"Yes, blend it in cold water first?"

"No, miss, I—I forgot—I mean I didn't know."

"Never mind, I'll fix it for you."

"I wish she'd go," said Leon to himself.

Millicent again looked into the saucepan and then at Leon. She endeavored to suppress the smile that defied her efforts to look serious.

She stood there for several seconds biting her lips, and after an effort she said in a business-like tone as she turned to the woman.

"I wish to cook some meat for your neighbor, can I borrow a frying-pan or a broiler?"

Leon gave a convulsive start and tried to hide the frying-pan in his paper apron.

"Certainly," said the woman, "the gentleman has the frying-pan."

"There she goes betraying me at the first opportunity," groaned Leon, "I'm caught now."

"Can you spare the frying-pan, sir?" advancing towards him.

"Yes, miss," he said, as he held it towards her, keeping his face averted. He let it fall and as he picked it up she walked in front of him.

Leon staggered back and Millicent, after staring at

him for a moment, cried out, "Why, Mr. Pelon, is it you?"

"Yes," said Leon in a despairing tone, "it is I."

He was a comical sight with his newspaper apron and his flour-spotted face and clothes.

To add to his grotesque appearance the whole side of his face was whitened with flour, and there was a speck of soot on his nose.

Millicent could not control herself and she burst out laughing.

"Such a ridiculous figure," she said to herself as she laughed, "but he is a dear good fellow to make a fire," and the tears came into her eyes.

"What am I to do?" groaned Leon.

"Such a figure!" said Millicent again, laughing.

"I'll never hear the end of this," groaned Leon.

Again the tears came into Millicent's eyes as she said, "The poor fellow to try to make soup."

"She'll never look at me again," another groan from Leon.

"To put flour in it in that way," said Millicent, again laughing.

"What a bundle of misfortunes I am!" groaned Leon.

"To get the poor woman wine and jelly, the dear good fellow (crying), I'll never forget it, the good fellow."

"What business had I to come anyway?" said Leon ruefully.

"To put on an apron," and again Millicent laughed.

"But," said Leon again to himself, "I couldn't let them freeze and starve."

"To say a man sent all these things! Yes, a man did send them, a dear good man, bless him," again Millicent's eyes filled with tears.

Millicent wiped her eyes and forced a smile as she walked over to him.

"Excuse me for laughing," she said, "but you do look too funny."

"I know it," he said with a sigh.

"But it was kind of you to assist this poor woman and I shall not forget it."

"I wish I could," said Leon.

"Mr. Pelon, there is my hand, you may count me as your friend," said Millicent, "and—and as a woman I thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you have done for this poor woman."

"Thank you," said Leon for want of something better to say.

"I hope you will forgive me for laughing, but you did look so funny."

"Thank you," said Leon in a dazed way.

"Excuse me," Mr. Pelon, "let me dust the flour off your face."

Millicent took her handkerchief and dusted the flour from his face. The poor fellow hardly knew whether he was awake.

"There now, sir, you look better."

"Thank you very much," said Leon, "can I be of any service to you?" he added.

"Thank you very much," said Millicent, "for your offer. If you will get some water for me I will be obliged."

Leon followed Millicent into Maud's room. Maud was still asleep.

"I really could not help laughing at you, you looked so funny with the apron on and the flour on your face; I hope you will excuse me," said Millicent as Leon returned with a can of water.

"Of course I will excuse you, Miss Sinclair; but I think that in some more serious matters you have hardly treated me with courtesy."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THEY BELIEVE IN ONE ANOTHER.

SUDDENLY Millicent stopped and became formal. She said, "I do not see any reason why I should excuse your most insulting treatment of me, sir."

"Insulting treatment of you? Why! What do you mean?" asked Leon.

Millicent looked at him scornfully.

"You ought to know what I mean," she replied.

"On my honor, I do not know what you mean, Miss Sinclair," said Leon earnestly; then he added imploringly, "O Millicent, why do you act this way? Why do you talk in riddles? Haven't we been parted long enough? Haven't I suffered enough? Haven't we had enough of this estrangement? I am willing to let bygones be bygones and forget the wretched past and forgive everything," he added sadly.

"Forgive?" said Millicent indignantly, "what have you to forgive?"

"What have I to forgive?" cried Leon with his eyes blazing; "what have I to forgive? Did I not write letter after letter to you? Yes, ten letters and yet you would not reply? Millicent, you might at

least have told me why you broke our correspondence off?"

"I replied to every letter I received from you, and I sent you several letters after you had ceased to write."

"What?" said Leon, and he looked keenly into the eyes of the girl. She returned his gaze without a quiver.

For a long time they stood staring into each other's eyes as if each desired to fathom the innermost thoughts of the other.

"Yes," she added, "and I could have forgiven your scandalous conduct had you not treated me with such insolence."

Leon shook his head in a most hopeless way. There was an expression of pain on his face as he said, "Millicent, I don't know what to say or do. All I can say I have said. I can repeat it and if you don't believe me I can't help it. I never left one of your letters unanswered, but you have ten or more of mine which have still to be answered."

"I have answered every letter you sent me. When did you write the last letter?" said Millicent.

"In March of last year," said Leon.

"The last I received from you was dated February 1st," said Millicent.

"What became of the others?" said Leon. "Your last letter to me was written in Lyonesse. In it you told me of the pleasant time you had at Mrs.

Waldridge's and it was full of kindness and affection. You said nothing of breaking off the correspondence."

"Was that the last one you received?" asked Millicent.

"Yes, that was the last one. I almost know it by heart. I have read it over a hundred times."

"Is that true?" she said looking into his eyes.

"It is," he replied.

"I believe you, Leon. I believe you," she said, and Leon held her off from him while he looked into her eyes.

"And," he said, "I believe you when you say you answered my letters. I want no proof. My dear, we have had enough of unbelief."

"Too much," she said as she slid into his arms. He was about to kiss her when she said:

"I am so happy, Leon, that I will forgive you."

"Forgive me?" echoed Leon in surprise. "Of what will you forgive me? I know of nothing for which you should forgive me."

"Nothing?" said Millicent.

"Nothing that I know of," said Leon.

"Did you not gamble your whole estate away among dissolute people in Paris?"

"No; who said I did?"

"Are you sure?" said Millicent.

"Sure? Why I never had possession of my estate. How could I gamble it away?"

"Then how came you to be so reduced as to be obliged to work as a common laborer?"

Leon looked at Millicent long and earnestly.

"Don't you know?" he said.

"No," she said. "Except what my father told me."

Leon was about to speak, but with an effort refrained.

After a pause he said:

"My dear girl, I will not tell you. You will know soon enough and I would rather not be the one to tell you. I must beg for your own good as well as mine that you do not ask me, and I ask you to put your faith in me so far as to believe my unsupported word when I say it was through no fault of mine that I became a common laborer. My darling," he added, "will you believe me?"

"I will, Leon," she said, and he took her in his arms.

"Now—now," she said, "I feel as if I were home again after a long, sad journey."

CHAPTER XXXII.

“NO LABORER CAN BE HARBORED.”

“How do you feel, dear?” said Millicent, placing her hand gently on Maud’s forehead as she sat on the bedside.

“Oh, very well,” replied Maud, but she looked anything but well.

“Not very well, my dear,” said Millicent smiling. “Now, do you know what I am going to do? I am going to take you right home with me. You shall not stay here an hour longer.”

Maud’s great eyes expressed gratitude. Then she looked alarmed as the thought flashed across her mind that there was a great difference in their stations. She was a beggar and Millicent a millionaire.

“No,” she said in an alarmed way. “No, you can’t do that; they won’t let you——”

“Who won’t let me?” said Millicent proudly.

“The directory,” said the girl fearfully.

“Don’t you trouble yourself, my dear, about that. I will send for the carriage and you will come home at once, and that will be like old times, won’t it?”

Maud’s face reflected the radiance of Millicent’s smile for a moment, then her face twitched as she said:

“I—I can scarce believe it is over——” and she burst out crying again.

This was too much for Millicent and she threw herself beside Maud and the two girls again cried together.

Poor Leon looked on in wonder. He did not know what to do. The girls paid no more attention to him than if he were a chair.

It cut him to the heart to see them crying and he wanted to console them but he was afraid. He stood on one foot and then on the other. Then he felt like moving towards the bed, but when he made a slight movement it made such a noise in the dead silence of the room that it startled him and he stood aimlessly where he was, looking helplessly at the girls.

Two or three times he essayed to speak, but when he opened his mouth he dared not break the silence.

How long he would have remained in one position it is impossible to tell.

Fortunately a rush of wind down the chimney made such a noise that the girls started and Leon took advantage of the noise and movement to say in what appeared to him to be a very harsh voice:

“Can I go—for a carriage?”

Both girls started, but Millicent simply said:

“If you will be so kind.”

Leon did not wait for any directions, but he went out of the door with great celerity.

He returned in a short time and while Millicent was getting Maud ready he arranged with a woman in the house to look after the sick woman in the next room.

Maud was very weak and Leon had to almost carry her down-stairs to the carriage. In a very short time the poor, half-starved girl was comfortably housed in the palace of Director Kirby.

Grace made big eyes when she saw what Millicent was bringing into the house—but to Grace everything which Millicent did was right.

Mr. Kirby was away from home.

Maud was in a very poor condition and the reaction had such a weakening effect that she became utterly helpless when she found some one to lean on; she gained strength very slowly.

The third day after her entrance to the house, the steward asked permission to see Miss Millicent. Millicent met him in the library.

“Miss Millicent,” said the steward, “I regret to say that there is an officer of the directory in the house who says that you are harboring a laborer, and that she must leave.”

“What!” said Millicent, with blazing eyes, “what is that?”

“Don’t, miss,” pleaded the steward, “don’t blame me; I was ordered to tell you. The officer is now down-stairs and you can see him yourself.”

“Show him in,” said Millicent, while she bit her

lips to keep back the indignant words which were almost forcing their way through them.

The officer entered. He was gorgeously uniformed. He bowed politely and remained standing as though awaiting a command.

Millicent looked at him defiantly for a moment, then, as he showed no signs of being anything but the humblest of servants, she laid aside her indignant manner and said quietly:

"I believe you have some business with me; will you be kind enough to name it?"

"This is Miss Sinclair, I believe?"

Millicent bowed.

"I am sorry to say, my lady, that I have been ordered to request you to send Maud Holt to some other quarters."

"How do you know that that young lady is in this house?" asked Millicent, hastily.

The officer raised his hand as if to ward off a blow as he said in a pleading tone: "Please don't blame me, my lady, I have nothing to do with the matter, I am merely obeying orders."

"I will remember that," said Millicent. "Please answer my question."

"I do not know how they got the information," said the officer.

"Why do they order this girl's removal?" said Millicent.

"Because she is a laborer, and section 708 of the

code provides that no director or officer of the company shall harbor a laborer."

"Why?"

"Because," replied the officer, "it is dangerous for the directory to mix with laborers. It interferes with the discipline and it tends to degrade them."

"Do you mean to tell me that I cannot offer the hospitality of my house to a friend who is sick and has no other home?" said Millicent, indignantly.

"That is the law, my lady, and I am sorry to have to inform you that you must obey it."

"Why must I obey such a law?"

"Because, my lady, if the laborer is not removed from this house within six hours after notice, it will be my duty to come here with such force as is necessary and remove her to one of the correction institutions."

"But she can't be removed."

"She must be removed inside of six hours."

"It may kill her. Would you kill her?"

"I must obey orders."

"Have you no feeling? Can't I appeal to your kindness, your mercy?"

"I have feeling, my lady, and sympathy, but I dare not express them."

"This young lady was my dearest friend. We were at school together. She is of good family, but is poor now. I found her sick, destitute and alone, and I brought her home. It will break her heart—

it will kill her to take her away now. Please, officer, will you not let me nurse my friend back to health?"

"My lady, it is useless to talk to me. I am only a machine in the hands of the directory. The law must be enforced no matter who suffers or even who dies."

In desperation Millicent faced the officer and said vehemently:

"She shall not be moved. I defy the law and its officers."

"Don't say that, my lady. It will only necessitate my using unnecessary force and will make more trouble for the laborer."

"Can't I in some way stop this?"

"There is no way to stop it."

"Will you let me try?"

"The law gives you six hours in which to remove her. You can use that time as you may see fit. You might try to get the order modified."

"I will try then," said Millicent.

"Can I be of any further service?" said the officer.

"You are of no service to me," said Millicent angrily.

The officer who was an intelligent, refined-looking young man flushed and looked pained at this retort. Millicent noticed it, and she added hastily:

"I beg pardon, I did not mean to hurt your feelings. I do not blame you personally."

"Thank you," said the officer gratefully, and he bowed as he went out.

"Six hours," said Millicent, "I have six hours to save Maud."

Then she dashed up-stairs and told Grace. Grace's indignation knew no bounds.

"Why didn't you tell him you wouldn't let her go? Why didn't you defy him and his law and the whole directory? Why didn't you order him out of the house? Why didn't you have Collins lash him with the scorpion? Why didn't you call me? Oh!" she cried impatiently, "what use are you?"

"My dear," said Millicent, "that officer was no more to blame than you; he has no discretion in the matter and merely follows directions. But we must see some one who can help us. So put on your hat and come."

The girls got into their coach and drove from one director's house to another, but one and all shook their heads and said the girl must go.

One director got the order so far modified as to allow Maud to remain for twenty-four hours and further to permit Millicent to select the place where she could be domiciled.

Millicent lost no time in selecting as comfortable a place as she could find in a laborer's family for Maud, where she supplied her with all the comforts which money could buy. She also notified Dr.

Clark and her brother of her whereabouts, and poor Maud rapidly recovered.

On Maud's recovery Grace was able to take her into her father's household in the guise of a servant and Millicent likewise secured similar asylums for Maud's father (who had been released from prison), her brother, and Doctor Clark.

These three men gratefully accepted positions as servants.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE IMPEACHMENT OF DANIEL SINCLAIR.

THE impeachment of Daniel Sinclair had become the general topic of conversation. He had never been popular with the directory, and from the day he had captured Lizzie, Col. Reed kept up a constant plotting against him.

That act had made these men deadly enemies, or at least made Reed a deadly enemy of Sinclair's.

Reed bent all his energy and made every effort to bring Sinclair into popular disfavor. With this end in view he began making friends of everybody in the directory; for this purpose he spent millions of dollars.

His town house was always open to his friends. He gave there a special entertainment three or four times a month. In his palace on the river heights which he called his cottage, he entertained his friends in truly royal style.

He gave a series of entertainments which dazzled the directory. About two hundred and fifty miles from the city he had a magnificent castle to which he would invite fifty to one hundred guests at a time and entertain them as long as they desired to stay.

He had a number of yachts, both steam and sailing, and they were always at the disposal of his friends. He made no enemies in giving these great entertainments, for he issued no invitations. He simply let it be known that all members of the directory, their families and friends, were welcome, and that an invitation was unnecessary; thus in the course of a few months he became the most popular man in the directory, and the members were willing to grant him any favor.

In the mean time the preparations for the impeachment of Sinclair progressed in a most alarming and rapid manner.

Sinclair was at first assured that the directory would refuse to consider the matter seriously and in this belief he had every reason to consider himself secure, for it was well known that the directory would be loathe to establish a precedent which might strike at any of them. There was scarcely one of their number who would desire a close scrutiny into the method by which he had acquired his fortune. There was scarcely a man in the whole board against whom there were not grave charges of speculation or dishonesty connected with his acquisitions.

Under these circumstances it was natural that the feeling was very strong against the impeachment proceedings.

In numerous interviews which he had with his

fellow-directors, Sinclair was assured that any movement looking towards impeachment would be voted down, and that by an overwhelming majority.

“Why,” said one of the directors; “no one but a fool would vote for it.”

“It would be suicide,” said another.

“What business has that fellow Hiton interfering with the affairs of the directory?” This was said by a prominent member of the board.

“It would make a precedent which would become intolerable,” said another.

Notwithstanding all this the proceedings went steadily on. They seemed to be impelled by some invisible but resistless force.

A special committee of one hundred was appointed to whom the whole matter was referred with power to try the whole question.

Sinclair made a thorough canvass of the committee and figured as the result that sixty-five were opposed to impeachment absolutely, twenty-five in favor of impeachment, while ten were non-committal. After this he breathed easier.

Still the preparations went steadily on until the 3d of September, when the committee announced that the impeachment trial would take place on the 10th.

This was short notice and rather startled Sinclair, but one of his friends said confidentially:

“The fact of the matter is this: the directory is

tired of the whole business and wants to get it out of the way."

Everything went to show that a large majority of the directory was in consonance with this opinion, and Sinclair almost felt like dismissing the matter from his mind.

On the 10th of September, the preparations had all been completed, and at twelve o'clock the committee assembled. The proceedings were held in the great hall of the Casino.

The trial was opened by impressive ceremonies.

All of the leading families were present in the balconies. The impeachment committee occupied the floor of the hall.

The president with the officers of the board and their secretaries occupied a raised dais or platform. The members of the committee of impeachment were ranged in semicircles directly in front of the president's chair. The counsel for the respective parties had positions to the right and left.

The proceedings were rather dry at first, being in the main documentary evidence and statements of the conditions of the Pelon estate, showing the changes that had been made in the investments of the funds, and various transfers made, and the reinvestments.

Mr. Hiton made a startling showing on behalf of the estate.

One of the committee whispered to his neighbor;

"This is simply bald villany," and others said as the proceedings went on that the looting of the estate was most stupidly and inartistically done.

One member said audibly, "The fellow ought to be impeached for the idiotic way he has done it."

After the evidence for the prosecution was all in, a recess was taken until eight o'clock in the evening.

Promptly at that hour the president's gavel fell.

The spectacle was picturesque, beautiful and impressive.

Sinclair presented his side of the case and there was some broad smiling at the showing it made; there were times when the audience and even the committee laughed outright as he explained how changing of the securities and reinvestments of moneys was always followed by a remarkable shrinkage; sometimes a change of investments would cost the estate fifty thousand, one hundred thousand and sometimes even half a million dollars. One of the members of the committee said:

"Sinclair's explanations are really funny."

At half-past ten o'clock the evidence was all in, and the parties submitted their case.

Then there was a break in the proceedings. The president called several of the committee to his desk, and held whispering conversations with them.

Meanwhile the heads of the committee began bobbing around; Mr. Reed was one of the most active.

There was a babel of voices both in the balcony and on the floor.

After an earnest conference with the president the committee-men left the chair and circulated among the committee speaking to four or five at a time. They were telling the members the result of their conference with the president. The president made some notes, then looking over the committee he brought his gavel down three times before he could secure silence.

He said: "Gentlemen, if it is the pleasure of the committee we will now take a vote on the question of the impeachment of Daniel Sinclair, a director of the United Supply Company. Are you ready to take a vote? All in favor say aye."

There was a chorus of ayes, and then the chairman added:

"All opposed, nay."

There were no nays, and the president added:

"It is a vote."

Sinclair stood on one side of the hall, deathly pale.

The chair again spoke—

"As each director's name is called, he will rise in his place and pronounce either the words 'guilty,' or 'not guilty.'"

There was almost perfect silence in the hall. The people in the balconies imagined they could hear the president breathe as the secretary arranged his papers.

The secretary looked at the president. The president nodded. The secretary then in a magnificent baritone voice began calling the roll.

“Richard J. Anthony.”

“Not guilty,” was the response.

Instantly there was a clapping of hands in the balconies. Again the secretary spoke.

“Charles——”

Down came the chairman’s gavel; the secretary paused and looked at the president. There was a dead silence. The president then spoke.

“It is necessary for the proper conduct of these proceedings that there be no demonstrations of either approval or disapproval; the officers will see that this order is enforced, and if it cannot be enforced otherwise they will clear the balconies; the secretary will now proceed.”

Again there was silence as the secretary called:

“Charles Brown.”

“Not guilty,” came in a clear ringing voice--there was a movement among the audience.

“John J. Berdict,” said the secretary.

“Guilty.”

This was followed by a deep breath that sounded almost like the rise of the wind.

“William Deymoure,” rang out the secretary’s voice.

“Guilty,” came the response.

Another name was called, followed by “not

guilty," and then another "guilty," and then three others "guilty," followed a single "not guilty."

Meanwhile half a dozen directors including Mr. Reed were working busily among the members; then six more names responded "guilty," and so the committee voted until ninety names had been called, showing a vote of sixty-five "guilty," twenty-five "not guilty." There was one vote lacking of the two-thirds necessary to impeach a member; the excitement was intense. The whispering, coughing and movement in the balconies was so great as to almost drown the voice of the secretary. Down came the president's gavel twice—there was instant silence.

"The audience must keep quiet. We must have perfect order. The secretary will proceed."

To the next name called came the response "not guilty."

The audience took a deep breath; the next voice rang out clear and sharp, "guilty," then for several moments the audience was uncontrollable; the president beat his gavel in vain; he paused and waited for the audience to get over the excitement.

Sinclair stood leaning against the wall, glaring wildly around and nervously tearing a piece of paper.

As soon as order was restored, the voting proceeded and every other man responded "guilty;" then the secretary called:

“Daniel Sinclair;” but there was no response. Sinclair had disappeared.

An officer was sent to seek him; he went through all the rooms and on returning reported that he could not be found in the building.

A motion was made to adjourn, and the committee adjourned *sine die*.

The moon was hidden behind clouds on the night of the impeachment and it was very dark on the bay; there were a number of steam yachts at anchor, and their black, shapely forms were scarcely visible in the darknesses. Two of them had steam up—the “Tartar” and the “Sythe.”

Upon the “Tartar” there was a good deal of bustle; a boat pulled from the shore and after making a long detour, came alongside of the “Tartar.” A muffled figure followed by the crew climbed on the deck; the boat was hastily davited; the bell rang and the yacht started.

At the same instant the “Sythe” slipped her cable and followed. The “Sythe” was a little astern, but she gained on the “Tartar” rapidly, and seemed about to pass when she changed her course and brought up alongside the “Tartar” with a slight concussion. In a moment twenty men jumped from the “Sythe” to the deck of the “Tartar.”

The man at the wheel was promptly knocked down; there was a scramble among the crew, but a peremptory order,

"Stand where you are and surrender," checked all movement in a moment.

A man came running up the cabin stairs; he was met by one of the boarders who quietly remarked:

"Don't be in a hurry, Sinclair." The flickering light of a lamp showed the features of Sinclair. He was ghastly pale.

"What does this mean, sir?" he asked in as strong a voice as he could command.

"Nothing," answered the man who confronted him, "except that we would like to know why you are sailing your yacht at this hour of the night and what you have in it?"

The speaker now moved in such a way that the light fell on his face, revealing the features of Mr. Reed.

"By what right have you?" cried Sinclair, "meddling——"

But Reed cut him off with a most sinister smile.

"Now, now, don't talk nonsense; I am a director and you are not. I am going to hold you a prisoner and take possession of the property you are taking to foreign parts. After we have secured what belongs to the Pelon estate, we will let you have the balance—perhaps; in the mean time make yourself as comfortable as you can."

Sinclair suddenly pulled out a revolver. Reed, by a quick movement, knocked it to the deck. Sinclair's breath came short as he panted:

“So you have been at the bottom of this business, have you?”

Reed laughed heartily as he replied:

“Have you just found that out? Well, I gave you credit for more brains than that.”

Sinclair got off the usual highly-spiced remarks, to which Reed listened with an amused smile. Then Sinclair was taken to the shore and put under surveillance.

In the yacht was found nearly fifteen millions in gold and securities.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ROYAL SPORT—BUT DANGEROUS.

It was a delicious spring day. The air was balmy, the sky was beautiful in its unbroken expanse of deep blue.

There were few places where such a day could be better enjoyed than at the conservatory.

The conservatory was located on the Grand Boulevard of Pactolus. It was a palace in the form of a cottage. It was set a goodly distance back from the roadway, with a velvety lawn running down to the flagging of the walk. There were a few ornamental trees scattered over the grounds and here and there a group of exotics.

To the right of the cottage there was a massive fountain, throwing a stream so fine that it seemed like gauze.

To the left was a small cataract almost hidden amongst shrubs.

When one entered this cottage it became a palace.

The floor of the entrance hall was a series of illustrations of historical events in tiling. The reception room was finished in oak—floor, walls and ceiling, and every panel was carved with a different design.

The settees, chairs and tables were of oak, and no two were alike; each was a work of art.

The parlor was white. The carpet was white with the exception of one corner which was ornamented with a great profusion of stars of a delicate shade of gold. They were scattered loosely over a part of the corner nearest the centre of the room, but they came closer together as they neared the apex of the corner, until their points interlaced and some were massed and heaped on top of one another. The effect was striking but pleasing.

The chairs and sofas were inlaid with ivory and gold and upholstered in white plush, silk or satin.

The curtains were like cobwebs.

The chandelier was of solid gold.

Through the house there were numerous suites of rooms furnished in the most luxuriantly extravagant manner.

There was a private dining room covered entirely with mirrors. The walls and doors were of massive plate mirrors. The ceiling was formed of enormous plate mirrors, and even the floor was composed of mirrors.

The feet of the tables and chairs were muffled, and guests dining in this room wore slippers with soles of plush.

There was a red room, a blue room, a gold room, and a silver room, an ebony room, and a room entirely upholstered in fur.

One of the most charming rooms in the house was the "nest" or rather the crystal room.

At the southwestern corner of the cottage was a tower or minaret. The top of this tower was an octagon-shaped room called the "nest." With the exception of the floor, this room was entirely of glass.

Eight people could be dined in this room, and a pleasanter place for dining can scarcely be imagined.

The view from the "nest" was a feast in itself—up the river, down the bay, across to the west hills, and back again across the two beautiful islands.

The views were charming. There was nothing to displease the eye but the dull, red and black city, disfiguring the landscape to the southeast.

This room was provided with an ingeniously constructed awning which could be shifted at will to keep out the light and sun when they became offensive.

It was a perfect dining room. As an added charm it was most delightfully exclusive, for it would accommodate but eight people and it was an unwritten law that no one should be permitted to dine in the "nest" who was not possessed of at least one million dollars.

It so happened that when Selby Gray opened his eyes on this beautiful spring morning with a yearning for a new draft of pleasure (he being ten times

a millionaire and consequently having the entry of the conservatory, and not only of the conservatory but of the red room, blue room, silver room, gold room, mirrored room, and also the "nest"), one would naturally suppose that Mr. Gray would seek to gratify his yearning for pleasure by breakfasting in the "nest."

To his credit be it said he did think of it, but then it was such an old story that he dismissed it, and his mind being very fertile in ideas this fine morning, he hit upon the very choice idea of breakfasting on the lawn in front of the conservatory.

He touched a bell. His valet entered.

"Send Stephens here," said Gray.

The valet retired and returned almost immediately with Stephens. Stephens was his steward.

"Stephens," said Gray, "I will breakfast on the lawn in front of the conservatory to-day at one o'clock. Twelve covers and, Stephens, have a light blue canopy over the table."

Stephens bowed and was about to retire when Gray spoke again.

"Stephens," pointing towards the window, "what kind of a day is it?"

"It is a beautiful day, sir."

"Then see that we breakfast in a manner worthy of the day;" and Stephens bowed and retired.

Then Gray ate a roll, drank a cup of coffee, dressed and went out into the highways and byways of the

millionaires to bid such of them as would to the number of twelve to his breakfast.

Mr. Gray's impromptu, informal breakfast on the lawn was a beautiful sight.

The table was beautifully furnished with silver and china and garnished with flowers; in the centre of the table which was round, there was a large glass basin partly filled with water. There was a glass cover over it. The basin was so arranged that the guests could see into it, and when they did look into it, they saw half a dozen gold fish, three turtles and five small water snakes who glided about the margin of the basin or swam gracefully in the water.

This was one of Stephens's surprises, the frequent springing of which relieved the tedium of the ten times millionaire's existence and made Stephens invaluable.

"What would I be without Stephens?" Gray would often say with a sigh.

Perhaps we are in error in not first noticing the people who graced the table. As simple people we would be perfectly right in discussing the evidences of wealth surrounding the table before them, but as people with an appendage of a million dollars or more we should notice them before all else, at least while they and their million or more remain together, so we will do our best to make amends.

There were six from fair-looking to very pretty

young ladies in the party, dressed in the prettiest of gay spring attire, and there were six fine-looking, exceptionally well-dressed young men.

Over the party and over the table and over the portion of the lawn occupied by the party, was a canopy of blue silk, trimmed with white lace and ribbons.

The ladies, their pretty toilets, the table, its furnishings, the flowers, the greensward and the canopy with its pretty ribbons fluttering in the breeze, taken together made a most beautiful picture.

Each of the guests was accompanied by a trained dog of the purest breed. These beautiful creatures lay around the table in picturesque attitudes.

There was plenty to eat—soups, fish, game, fruits, confectionery, but the guests were not hungry.

There was plenty to drink; wines of all kinds, but the guests were not thirsty. Still they did drink “just for want of something better to do,” as pretty Miss Rimmel said.

“When did you get that bay I saw you riding yesterday, Mr. Wyant?” asked Kitty Benton.

“Did you like him?” asked Wyant.

“Yes,” answered Miss Benton, “I think he is just sweet.”

“Do you really? Then he’s yours,” said Wyant as he sipped a glass of wine. “I will send him to your stable to-morrow morning and if you will be so kind I will accompany you the first time you mount him.”

"O Mr. Wyant," said Miss Benton, clasping her hands, "you are just lovely."

"Isn't he though?" said Carl Hawton.

"Any more at the same price?" asked Lillie Hall, laughing.

"Do you give any discount on that price?" asked Gray.

"Now, I think you are all a lot of jealous creatures," said Kitty; "but never mind, Mr. Wyant, I will be in the saddle to-morrow at four."

"Who's that fellow that Grace Kolter is engaged to?" asked Tom Wilson. "Does anybody know?"

"Yes, I know," said Violet Lee. "He's from Wyanto, his father is in the local board of directory out there."

"What is he worth?" asked four or five of the guests together.

"Oh, very little," said Violet; "about half a million."

"Half a million?" said George Jackson. "Why he's away low down."

"The girl's a fool," said Gray.

"She always was," said Kitty.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Violet. "Let us try whose dog is best trained at catching meat."

"Good!" chorused the guests.

"Here, Flint," said Violet.

A beautiful dog stood beside her. She picked up

a squab in her fingers and threw it into the air; the dog caught it and brought it to her.

"Eat it, you fool," she said; and the dog ate it.

Then the other guests began throwing birds and parts of chickens and other meats to the dogs who scrambled after them in a way which entertained the guests mightily.

Miss Kitty's dog missed a bird which she threw. In a moment her merriment was changed to rage.

"Come here," she cried.

The poor brute came skulking to her feet.

She unfastened a silver handled whip or scorpion from her girdle.

"Take that, you nasty brute," she cried. Then she plied the lash with a vigor and cruelty that was strange to see, while the poor beast lay submissively at her feet pleading with its beautiful eyes for mercy.

She stopped when her breath was exhausted. Then kicking the prostrate animal, she exclaimed, "Get away, you nasty thing, I will have Williams give you a good beating when we get home."

"Are you tired, dear?" said Violet, sympathetically. "I wouldn't whip him if I were you. I always get Thompson to beat Jess."

"Hillo! what is this coming down the Boulevard?" said Wyant.

The guests looked up the road and saw a body of men marching in a cloud of dust.

"It's only a squad of laborers," said Gray.

"I'll tell you what will be fun. Let us toss meat to these fellows and see if they can catch as well as dogs," said Jackson.

"Good, so we will," said several of the party.

Meanwhile the squad of laborers advanced rapidly. There were about fifty of them. They were dressed in a coarse cloth of a dirty brown color. On the breast of each man's coat were stencilled two numbers, first his individual number, and under that the section to which he belonged. They marched four abreast.

They were a hungry, cadaverous lot of creatures, with a hopeless, unhappy expression of countenance.

The ladies were somewhat shocked and awed by the sight of these unhappy mortals, as they marched down the Boulevard looking eagerly and hungrily at the food on the tables.

They were accompanied by two armed overseers or sergeants.

As the squad came opposite to the canopy, Gray called out:

"Sergeant, come here."

"Halt!" said the Sergeant.

The squad halted.

The sergeant walked to the table and saluted Gray.

"Who are these men?" said Gray.

"They are a squad of section 96," said the sergeant.

"Where are you taking them?" asked Gray.

The sergeant answered: "To the river grain yard at Eastside."

"Well," said Gray, "we want to see if they are any good for a scramble."

"But," the sergeant remonstrated, "the colonel gave me orders to——"

"I'm giving orders now," said Gray angrily, "so order them to break ranks and catch what they can."

"Break ranks," ordered the sergeant.

The compact body instantly broke into a number of separate individuals.

"Here, you fellows," said Gray; "we are going to give you something to eat. Now, see who can catch. Whoop, here goes," and he threw a half chicken into the crowd.

Instantly there was a scrambling that was indescribable. The men rushed together, crowded, scrambled and struggled. The man who caught the chicken placed it to his mouth and began eating. In a second twenty hands were trying to tear it away from him.

He held it to his mouth and ate it ravenously. Fragments were torn off and swallowed by the struggling men until the chicken had all disappeared.

Meanwhile the guests were clapping their hands and cheering the men on. Then each of the guests began throwing various kinds of food to the laborers.

Here a chicken was thrown by one of the guests and caught by one of the laborers. Instantly half a

dozen hands would snatch at it and it would be torn to shreds and devoured almost in a moment.

Then a duck would be thrown in such a way as to hit one of the struggling men. Then there would be a rush for the man who caught it.

Truly it was a merry scramble and it was a new diversion for these pleasure-surfeited gentlemen and ladies.

It was entertaining; it was amusing; it was almost exciting.

Some of the guests whose sole occupation for years had been yawning at intervals of five and ten minutes, were so well entertained that they forgot to yawn—yes, even looked interested.

Many who had not for years allowed their enslaved countenances more than the liberty of a smile or a sneer shook off the trammels of their unnatural existence and actually broke out into a laugh.

They even became merry and familiar with one another. They let fall the mask of artificiality behind which they moved and acted like men and women who had been betrayed into throwing off the awful unnaturalness of their daily life by the too free use of the wine cup.

They were intoxicated not only with wine, but with excitement.

Here was an amusement such as they had never seen. It was fresh and it acted as a relish on their pleasure-satiated appetites.

Here was an amusement that was new for these ladies and gentlemen who looked with languid interest upon horse-racing, yachting, and even pugilism and dog-fighting. The utmost skill displayed in games had ceased to interest this most unhappy circle of society.

But here was suddenly discovered an amusement that fairly bristled with variety of action and strange surprises.

It was actually exciting.

It was, however, the excitement of the arena, the arousing of that uncommendable element in man's nature which causes patrons of gladiatorial combats to become fiercely happy at the sight of blood.

And, strangest of all, these men and women actually became hungry. This fresh amusement gave them appetites for food.

In the intervals of throwing meat, they ate morsels of food and enjoyed it even as the hungry enjoy food—a sensation they had not experienced in many a day. They drank their wine and enjoyed that also.

They were merry and excited and fiercely happy.

Eat, drink and be merry, ladies and gentlemen, for this is your last meal.

The guests kept tossing meats and vegetables of all kinds and the laborers kept scrambling for them, but in a few minutes the table was cleared.

“Bring more,” cried Gray. “Instantly,” he added, and the waiters ran to fulfil the order.

The waiters knew that Gray meant "instantly" and they returned in a way that pleased him.

They brought chickens, ducks, birds and joints. They brought entrées, they brought roasts, they brought vegetables, they brought desserts. Everything they brought was flung to the laborers, fought for, devoured or trampled under foot.

This supply was soon exhausted.

"Bring more," cried Gray.

"There is no more cooked," whispered the waiter.

"Bring the raw meat, then," shouted Gray. "All you have!"

The waiters brought the raw meat, steaks, chops, chickens, game and birds; they were each and all thrown to the men, seized, torn into fragments with hands and teeth, and devoured.

Somebody threw a bottle of wine and the example was immediately followed by others.

Bottles were tossed to the laborers—some empty, some partly filled, some full. Most of the bottles were caught by the laborers and were broken. The glass was crushed under the feet of the men.

When a laborer caught a bottle he broke off the head, thrust the jagged neck into his mouth and poured the liquor down his throat. Sometimes the bottle would be snatched from him before he had finished it; then there would be a scuffle or a fight.

This was intensely amusing to Gray's guests and they frequently paused in their bottle tossing to

watch the men (sometimes four or five of them) with lacerated hands and faces streaming with blood, fighting over a bottle.

Never was rare old wine and liquor treated as these were treated. Port, sherry, champagne and brandy, whiskeys and cordials were thrown among the men.

It was not long before the effect of the wine began to show itself among the men. They became noisy; until now they had been almost noiseless.

It was a singular sight to see these men struggling with one another scarcely uttering a word.

Bitter experience had taught them that a loud word uttered in the presence of their overseers or officers brought upon the offenders swift and cruel punishment.

These broken-spirited men had wrestled, struggled and fought like tigers, and the only sound heard by the guests was a sort of hoarse muttering and hard breathing which sometimes sounded like the growling of wild beasts.

Only once or twice some of the laborers had shrieked out in agony when they were being bitten or an arm or leg was wrenched. Then they would forget everything and shriek out. This was both startling and amusing to the guests.

Until the wine began to affect them, the laborers had remained at a respectful distance. Not one of them had ventured beyond the walk.

They seemed to regard the green lawn as dangerous and in their wrestlings and struggling they did not even so much as place one foot on the grass. For the most part they kept on the outer edge of the foot path.

But, now, they seemed to be emboldened by intoxicants and ventured nearer and nearer the edge of the lawn. One man in an attempt to catch a bottle placed his foot almost on the green. This excited the anger of Gray.

“Get off the lawn,” he roared. “Get off, you scoundrel; take that.” And he flung a bottle of champagne full at his head.

The man dodged it and it was caught by the man behind him.

Here was a new variation of this highly seasoned sport, and the guests quickly adopted that method of amusing themselves.

Now, instead of tossing the liquor to the men, they pelted them with the bottles.

Each guest would single out some man and throw a bottle at his head; generally the men caught them, but some of them struck their mark and many of the men were badly cut and bruised.

The laborers were now a horrible-looking group. Unkempt and ragged as they were, many of them had their faces, hands and arms slashed and bleeding, and even those who were not cut were smeared with blood from contact with the wounded.

Some had staunched the flow of blood by binding their wounds and cuts with pieces of rag.

After a time some of these really terrible-looking men became so much under the influence of liquor that they were almost boisterous.

The grotesque movements and incoherent talk of these men was very amusing to the guests. But the volume of sound gradually increased from a low murmur to a proportion which would have been alarming to most people, but the fun-loving guests felt so secure that the thought of danger never entered their delicately perfumed heads.

Such a thing as an assault on a director or even a menace by an employee of the company had not been heard of for years. The punishment was so swift that it was almost like suicide to attempt either.

Circled as they were by all sorts of protection, the guests paid no heed to the ominous growling of the laborers. It even amused them just as they might have been amused by the growling of a safely caged lion whom they had roused.

What was there to fear in these miserable slaves? for they were nothing less. They were utterly dependent on the company for the work by which they earned their bread, and if they were dismissed from the company's works, what could they do? They could not find work elsewhere.

Their work was the hardest for the longest hours

and for the poorest pay. With their pay they could scarce purchase enough of the coarsest food to keep them alive.

They had but a few hours of sleep; they generally had long distances to walk to their work; and steady, ceaseless and monotonous labor it was.

Thousands were driven mad by the monotony and severity of their labor, for many were men of intelligence and education.

In the breast of nearly every one of the laborers there was a feeling of great and cruel wrong, and in their hearts there smouldered a never-ceasing desire for revenge.

They scarcely hoped for a bettering of their condition, but they longed for revenge.

They lived in wretched tenements, crowded together like cattle in an unhealthy atmosphere. They suffered from cold in winter and from heat in summer. They suffered from lack of food at all times. They saw their wives and children ailing, sickening and dying for lack of food, for lack of clothes, for lack of air, for lack of warmth, for lack of the most common material needs.

Under such circumstances it can hardly be called exaggeration to say they were desperate. They hardly cared what became of them. They could scarcely be worse off.

Such were the men who now stood before the guests struggling with one another for bottles of

wine, and already under the influence of strong drink.

One of the ladies threw a bottle of champagne, but with such an unsteady hand that it fell on the lawn three or four feet from the foot path.

One of the men rushed for it, stooped forward and was about to grasp it when Gray shouted at him,

“Get out of that, you hound,” at the same instant he flung a large, heavy bottle at the man. It struck him on the head.

It broke into fragments—the man fell senseless on his face with the red wine spattered over his head and shoulders.

A moment of deathless silence followed. Then the voices of the laborers and the guests mingled in an involuntary cry of horror.

A companion of the fallen man (a man of large stature) ran to his assistance.

“You scoundrel, how dare you!” cried Gray, and at the same instant he produced a revolver and fired two shots at the advancing laborer.

The laborer uttered a yell, jumped into the air, and fell in a heap on the insensible man.

With a cry that was horrible in its menacing significance the whole group of laborers rushed forward as with one impulse.

In a moment the table was surrounded and down it went with a crash. Crash went the chairs and

crash went the dishes, and down went the guests as if they were so much grass.

Fragments of the table, chairs and even crockery became weapons in the hands of the infuriated laborers. But as weapons they were needless, for the weapon which the laborers did use was their feet. They simply knocked the guests down and trampled them under their feet.

The women shrieked and the men swore, but only for a moment were their voices heard.

The laborers kicked, stamped and trampled the guests until every sign of life and semblance of humanity was trampled out of the gay party which a moment before was insolently laughing at them.

Then the laborers paused and looked at their work; it was thoroughly done. There was not a sign of life in all of that gay party.

There they lay dead under the torn fluttering canopy, under the litter of broken furniture and dishes, dressed in their beautiful finery, with faces and bodies crushed and blood-stained and flattened, covered with fragments of tables, chairs and dishes and food.

Many of the dogs, too, who had faithfully stood by their masters and mistresses had their lives trampled out of them by the infuriated laborers.

Then the laborers turned to the cottage with a savage yell; they rushed up to it and into it. They ran through the building seeking the proprietor,

patrons and the servants, but they had one and all fled the moment the attack was made.

The house was deserted.

Then the laborers began their revels. They went into the cellar and carried up armfuls and basketfuls of the finest wines and liquors, and drank them as they ran from room to room.

They poured wines on the elegant carpets and over the furniture and threw the bottles through mirrors and windows.

One group took possession of the "nest" and as they finished each bottle they threw it through the window.

Rich hangings were torn down; carpets torn up; furniture was smashed, carried into the parlor, heaped up, and then they set fire to the house.

In a few minutes the heat of the rooms became unbearable. The fire spread rapidly. The laborers seized the dead bodies of Mr. Gray and his party and hurled them into the blazing building.

In the upper part of the house were laborers overcome by liquor, some utterly unconscious, others sufficiently awake to realize their danger. Some of them dropped out of windows, others were overtaken by the flames.

In the mean time the laborers kept up a perfect pandemonium of yelling intermingled with savage jests.

Then appeared to the south a cloud of dust roll-

ing up the Boulevard. One of the laborers noticed it.

“Soldiers!” he cried.

The laborers became silent in a moment. Not a sound could now be heard save the roaring of the fire.

They said not a word, but with a common impulse scattered and ran in various directions.

The cottage was burned to the ground.

The next day at five o'clock in the afternoon, all of the laborers who had survived the fire, were led out into a square and in the presence of thousands of their companions, killed in a most cruel manner.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WAS THE COMPANY JUSTIFIED?

THE company acquired the title to the several blocks leading to its main depot. These blocks were occupied by stores and dwellings; they were speedily changed into store-houses.

A strange feature about these store-houses was the system of ventilation which the company adopted for the purification of the atmosphere.

The windows were heavily barred, and from each window projected twenty iron pipes all pointed toward the street at various angles. Some pointed down the street, some up. Those at the top pointed into the street.

These pipes were less than one inch in diameter, and some people said they looked like rifle barrels.

It was regarded as a decided novelty in ventilation and much curiosity was expressed as to its method, but the company would allow no one to examine its workings.

The awful tragedy at the riverside cottage forced an issue between the people and the company. The people felt that the tyranny of the company was intolerable. Moreover, there had been a number of outrages perpetrated by the directors.

There was nothing left but revolt.

This was the final decision of the most intelligent and thoughtful men in the League. It meant the final reluctant determination of law-abiding men.

"We must either destroy the company, or the company will destroy us," said John Hoe, the president of the League.

The meetings were crowded. They were orderly, and the measures proposed were calmly discussed.

Nearly every inhabitant was enrolled.

Every precaution was taken to keep their deliberation from the company, and to keep its members free from its influence.

After long deliberation a plan of operations was adopted. The laborers were to meet on a certain day (to be announced the night before) at a point near the company's main office, to suddenly surround and capture the building, and to make prisoners of the president and directors; then to give them the choice of dissolution of the corporation or death.

Then to hasten to the seat of government, capture the Capitol and insist upon the repeal of the company's charter.

This was the general outline of a wild and most impractical plan of relief.

It was desperate, but they could devise no better. "There is but little chance of success, but we must do something," said one of the members.

The "League" was divided into councils, and each council had a civil and military head. The councils made frequent excursions into the country at night, where they were thoroughly drilled.

Each man in some mysterious way procured for himself fire-arms, many also had swords and other weapons.

In an incredibly short space of time, the general or military commander of the "League" reported to the president and council that he had one hundred thousand men drilled and equipped and ready for action. Minute calculations were made and it was resolved to strike the blow.

It is perhaps needless to remark that all of the doings and plans of the "League" were daily reported to the company. It was strange, however, that the company seemed to make no preparations to defend itself.

The depot or main office was guarded by a few men, but there was no sign of military force.

The 10th of May was one of nature's fairest days, everything seemed bathed in joyous sunlight. A Sabbath calm rested on the beautiful city and its doomed inhabitants.

It was a calm which preceded a most awful tragedy.

The president of the company sat in one of the rooms of the company's depot. He faced the window which commanded a view of the great

avenue which led directly to the entrance of the depot.

Beside him was a mahogany table studded with rows of small white buttons similar to those used in electric call bells.

Each button was numbered and the place with which it communicated printed upon the table.

There were twelve other men in the room, three of whom from time to time inspected certain wires attached to the wall running down through the floor.

The president looked at his watch. It wanted five minutes of twelve o'clock.

"Are they all in working order?" said he to one of the men.

"They are, your excellency," replied the man.

"Sure?" asked the president in a menacing voice.

"Certain," said the man.

"Well, we shall reduce the membership of the 'League' somewhat," said the president with a vicious smile as he glanced at the table. "Tell Brown to report the moment they appear."

A man sent the message, and reported "All right."

"Two minutes more," said the president glancing at his watch, "and our dear fellow-citizens will have a most palpable proof of the impregnability of our headquarters."

"If there should be a misconnection," said one of the directors nervously.

"There are no 'ifs' about this; I have given it my

personal attention," interrupted the president impatiently.

"It makes me shudder to think of it," said another.

"Then go out amongst those vagabonds and you won't shudder long," answered the president quickly. "We are acting in self-defence. The company or the people must be master, and inside of ten minutes the question will be settled forever."

The man at the telephone spoke, "Johnson reports that they are formed in solid ranks in Rider Street and for a mile down the avenue. The leader is addressing them. He says, As soon as you reach the door, cut a hole, force in a dynamite cartridge, and blow it off its hinges. He says to kill no one if they surrender."

"Very kind," said the president with a grim smile.

"Word is passed along the line commanding absolute silence."

"The order is given to march," said the man at the telephone, "they are coming."

"Four minutes behind time," said the president contemptuously; "those fellows have no regard for time."

A distant muffled sound was heard.

"The head of the line has almost reached the corner of Rider Street," said the man at the telephone.

The muffled sound became more audible.

Suddenly at the corner of Rider Street and Depot Avenue, a line of men wheeled into sight, marching with military precision. Then another and another, and almost in a twinkling, from curb to curb, the avenue was black with men. Not a word was spoken. No sound was heard save the momentarily increasing sound of tramping feet.

On they came, the front line carrying axes and hatchets, behind them came rank upon rank of men with all kinds of arms.

There was nothing military about them save their determined looks, solid ranks, and steady, even tread.

Dogged determination was depicted on every face.

No sound but their tread came from the men. No sound whatever came from the depot.

The president kept his seat and calmly watched their approach.

The other occupants of the room watched the approach with bated breath.

The silence in the room was awful, it was horrible.

The perspiration stood out on the foreheads of every one in the room except the president. About him there was not the slightest tremor of nervousness.

The conspirators reached the middle of the block, a dark compact mass of human beings, and the depot gave forth no evidence of life.

"They must have escaped," whispered one commander to another.

"Impossible," he replied in a low tone.

"We will soon know," said the first.

The head of the line had now reached the corner of the street opposite the depot door.

All down the street a solid mass of men moving in unison as though controlled by one will.

"They have crossed the street," said the man at the telephone.

Suddenly over the muffled sound of tramping feet clear and sharp rang out the word, "Halt." Then down the street each in quick succession came the command, "Halt!" "Halt!" "Halt!" "Halt!" "Halt!" until the word tapered away into a mere echo in the distance.

And the column ceased to move forward.

The column became motionless save here and there a slight movement of some man who spoke to his comrade or moved his gun.

The silence became ominous.

The president was sitting quietly in his seat. Those in the room were watching him anxiously.

One of the men in a scarcely audible voice said, "When will you——"

The president turned to him with a peculiar smile. "They have done nothing wrong yet, we are not the aggressors, you know," he said.

"The other column have reached the western door," said the man at the telephone.

Again silence broken only by a low hum of voices. Out of the deadly silence rose a voice clear and

strong, "Break down the doors." In a moment there was a discordant din of hammers and axes, beating at the doors. The sound rang through the building and resounded in the street.

Then there arose from the street a cheer, round, full and sonorous, the first that had been heard in the city for many weary days. There is a grandeur in a cheer coming from a compact body of men.

It is exhilarating, grand, beautiful. It is unlike any other earthly sound. It is thrilling.

Again and again it was taken up by the column and down along the line it travelled until it died away in the distance.

It seemed like a resonant echo of the gladiatorial cry of imperial Rome, "O Cæsar, we who are about to die, salute you."

The scene was impressive. The sound sublime.

Their last cheer had died away and the discordant sound of the axes was renewed.

The president turned to the directors with a meaning smile, "That is the signal," he said.

There was not a dry eye in the company but his. Each man was awed by the terrible import of the moment.

The president turned towards the table and placed the index finger of each band on a button.

"For God's sake don't do it," cried one of the directors, rushing forward and seizing his arm. There

was a general movement forward, but no other word was uttered.

The president shook off the hand, rose, looked contemptuously at the director, and said, "You fool, leave the room."

The man looked imploringly at him.

He pointed towards the door and the man went out.

The president resumed his seat.

The sounds of the axes continued from time to time, drowned by the cheers from the column.

The president turned towards the company, "Are there any others here with delicate nerves?" he said with a sneer. "If so, they had better leave now."

No one spoke.

The president turned towards the table, placed the index finger of each hand on a button.

He glanced out of the window. The men were packed together as close as they could stand.

A young man close to the corner cried out, "Three cheers for the League, hip, hip——"

He never finished the sentence.

The president pressed two of the buttons. There was a sharp report as of a thousand rifles. The president and directors watched the effect.

All down the line on the sides nearest the houses men were seen to throw up their arms, then sink down in a heap. The air was filled with cries, groans and screams.

The president placed his fingers on the buttons again and a line of men the length of the block threw up their arms and sank down on the ground.

Again the president's fingers pressed the buttons and again the same scene was enacted.

Now ensued a scene indescribable in its horror.

The president's fingers literally danced over the buttons as if they were keys of a piano and he played a song of death, and men sank like grass under the scythe; down they fell screaming, groaning and cursing.

The air was filled with the shrieks of the wounded and dying. A panic seized those who were left standing. They turned to fly, they scrambled over the prostrate bodies of their comrades, pushing and struggling and fighting with one another like madmen in their efforts to get away.

Now they were leaping over the fallen bodies, or climbing over them, then down amongst the dead, now falling and being trampled upon, again regaining their feet only to be met by the murderous bullets pouring like hail out of the so-called ventilators of the company's store-houses.

At each pressure of the president's fingers the ranks of the struggling fleeing men became thinner and the heaps of the wounded and dead larger.

From every window in the store-houses and depot the ventilators poured death upon the fleeing

wretches and riddled the bodies of both the quick and the dead.

Inside of five minutes the president ceased plying his fingers over the buttons.

The man at the telephone had announced, "They are all down. There is not a man standing in front of the depot, or on any of the streets leading to it."

The president and directors looked out of the windows. Most of them shut their eyes and covered their ears.

The sights which met their gaze and the sounds rising to their ears were too horrible for mortal contemplation.

Which were more horrible, the sounds or the sights, no one could tell. It was a nightmare which haunted the spectators for many a day.

Down on the pavement everywhere surrounding the depot lay men by the thousand, wounded, dying or dead. In some places they were heaped upon one another three, four and five deep; in others individuals lay stiff and stark on the ground.

They were in every conceivable attitude.

Many were crawling away.

Some of the heaps of dead men were moving strangely, apparently without cause. This movement was caused by the wounded men in the heaps trying to extricate themselves and get from under their dead comrades.

The cries, moaning, groans, and shrieks of the wounded were appalling.

Some were crying for water, others were screaming that their dead comrades were crushing or smothering them; some were shrieking with pain, others begging for mercy.

Here a man was crawling away with one or both arms hanging useless by his side; here a man dragging one useless leg after him, again a man with blood on his face, another covered with blood.

"There are some trying to escape," said Sidney Griffin, pointing to about a dozen men who were crawling or staggering towards Rider Street.

"Let them go," said the president, "I don't care to kill them, I only want to show them what we can do, that we are masters. Tell Mr. Clifton to have the wounded carried to the hospital, do everything possible and spare no expense. Have the dead removed to the empty store-houses on east side. Let the friends have the bodies. Send word to the carpenter shops to have five thousand neat black coffins made by noon to-morrow. Let it be announced that the company will bury the dead at its own expense.

"Have the wounded and dead counted at once, and report full particulars. Wire the facts in full to every city in the country. Gentlemen, we have finished our business in this room, let us retire.

"Mr. Crant, please have the room put in order and have it locked up until we need it again.

"I congratulate you on your invention, it is a great success, good afternoon."

About five o'clock that afternoon all of the dead and wounded were removed. The blood was washed from the streets. Two thousand men were in prison under charge of conspiracy.

The ringleaders were sentenced to hard labor for long periods. The less active members were punished in lesser degrees (the company had an accurate description or account of the part each prominent member had taken in the League). Many were sentenced to distant parts of the country and the majority were held under suspended sentences for good behavior.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HORACE TASCOTT WAS THE FIRST VICTIM.

THE people were conquered. They were subdued. They were cowed. They went about their work sullenly.

Thousands of men and women, believing all hope of a better condition was ended, took their own lives.

Many of the messages they left were inexpressibly sad; many were pathetic. All spoke hopelessly of the dreary world they were leaving.

Scarce one spoke of the vast uncertainty into which they were plunging.

These foolish people set themselves up as prophets of evil. They assumed to know the future. They prophesied the future by the light of the past.

This is the safest guide to prophecy. But they left out of the consideration the important factor that in the world there are forces superior to man's will.

In the face of these forces the greatest of men are atoms.

The world is for the people—for the whole people—and all the forces of the world, if left alone, work in the interest of the great majority.

The directory felt that they had gained a great victory and were inclined to punish the laborers for their disloyalty.

The overseers in the different works were directed to enforce the strictest discipline.

The president had prepared a schedule reducing the hours of labor and increasing the pay to such a degree as would have given the laborers many comforts, but upon hearing of the intended outbreak, he said:

“If they can find time and strength to plot and fight, they are not so badly off.”

And the reforms were laid aside.

When the directors of this great company had reached a point when they could defy all the engines of man to dislodge them, and when they felt themselves invincible and their position impregnable, they unwittingly created that which sent their company flying into atoms.

It is a singular fact that the more money a spendthrift has and the more he spends for foolish extravagances, the less he is willing to devote to uses which are practical and useful.

The extravagant man seems to grudge every penny which he is obliged to pay out for legitimate purposes and is willing to stoop to petty meanness to save trifles.

When the revolt of the laborers gave the directory an excuse for refusing to do anything in the

way of ameliorating their condition either by increasing their wages or improving the sanitary condition of their workshops and homes, great numbers of the board looked upon the revolt as an unmixed boon.

This saved money, increased their dividends, and it placed the company on a more solid foundation than it had ever occupied before.

The sanitary condition of the city was not good. The sewers in the laborers' and factory quarters were neglected and allowed to get out of repair. The streets were not cleaned, except as far as the laborers could work at them in the evening after their day's labors.

The superintendents of the factories paid no attention to the sanitary condition of the workrooms nor to the health of the operatives.

One superintendent suggested to Horton Mayhew, one of the visiting directors, that certain improvements in his department, such as better ventilation and drainage, would add to the comfort and health of the working men and women. Mr. Mayhew answered thus:

"Superintendent, let me say this. You are here to look after the interests of the company, not of the laborers. The less expense you have in your department the larger will be your showing of profits at the end of each quarter, and the larger the profits the more the company will think of you."

There was a good deal of sickness among the people, but the doctors had but little skill in combating disease.

There were several hospitals to which the sick were taken, but the laborers were afraid of these hospitals and they concealed their sick relatives and friends.

There were whispers of horrible doings in the hospitals which caused the laborers to regard them with dread.

One warm evening in June about a month after the revolt, a group of men and women stood around a bed upon which a laborer was lying.

A child was holding a tallow candle the fitful glare from which exaggerated the alarm and horror which was depicted on the faces of the group.

The laborer was a man of about forty-five years of age, of muscular build. His shirt was open, and traced over his breast, shoulders and face were a series of livid, irregularly formed rings.

The laborer was Horace Tascott. He had come home sick. He threw himself on his bed and almost immediately became unconscious. Shortly after, his wife noticed the small irregular rings forming over his face and body. She became alarmed and called in her neighbors.

One of the laborers' doctors was called. He was puzzled and admitted that he had never heard of any disease with symptoms such as Tascott's.

He prescribed some experimental remedies and sat by the patient. He watched him through the whole night. From time to time through the night, the alarmed neighbors came to inquire as to the patient's condition.

As the sun rose, Tascott regained consciousness. The livid rings disappeared and he rapidly recovered and by eight o'clock he said to the doctor: "I never felt better in my life."

"Don't you feel weak?" asked the doctor.

Tascott arose and after drawing a deep breath and stretching himself, said with a smile:

"Why, no, I don't think I ever felt stronger."

"I don't understand it," said the doctor.

Tascott went to his shop and worked until late to make up for the time he had lost. He slept well that night. The next morning as he arose, he said to his wife: "I feel very queerly."

"What is the matter?" she said.

"I don't know," he answered in a hesitating way; "I—I'm hot and cold—and——"

He fell back on the bed and in a few minutes the rings began again to appear on his face and body.

The doctor was sent for and again experimented with good success, for by nightfall the patient was up and dressed and as he expressed it, "stronger than ever."

Next day he worked until two o'clock. He then left his work and cunningly slipping out of the

workshop wandered up into the part of the city where the directors lived. At midnight he returned and before morning he was dead.

The next day twenty-five of the laborers in Tascott's shop were taken with the same disease.

Then the contagion spread to other shops.

A committee of the laborers' doctors went to the directory.

They had an interview with three of the directors Messrs. Mayhew, Griffin and Drier.

These gentlemen were just starting on a pleasure trip, but they stopped long enough to hear what the doctors had to say.

"Well," said Mayhew, who was a man of about thirty-five years of age, "what do you expect of us?"

"We think," answered Dr. Slócum, "that something should be done to improve the sanitary condition of the laborers' quarters."

"What is the matter with the sanitary condition of the laborers' quarters?" asked Mayhew.

"The sewers are very much out of repair and the streets and houses need cleaning."

"Now, see here," said Mayhew, "the company have no money to spend repairing sewers, and if they had it is useless expense, and as for the cleaning, let the laborers do that themselves."

"They have no time," said the doctor.

"They never have time for anything that may be

useful," said Mayhew; "but they have plenty of time to plot mischief and murder."

"But," protested the doctor, "this disease may develop into an epidemic."

"Pooh!" said Mayhew, with a sneer. "We are not to be frightened by any bug-a-boo of that sort. If they want an epidemic down there they are welcome to it, but for goodness' sake don't bother us about it."

"Then you will do nothing?" asked the doctor.

"You have said it," said Mayhew, "just as well as I could; we will do nothing."

The other directors laughed at this sally and they followed Mayhew to their carriage, leaving the doctors standing in the corridor.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE LAWYER SENT NO BILL.

A COMMISSION was appointed to take an account of the valuables found in Sinclair's yacht. His whole belongings amounted to about \$16,000,000.

Leon was highly elated when he heard of the amount of money and felt justified in believing that he would receive from the commission nearly the whole of his father's estate, with increase, which amounted in all to over \$10,000,000.

Mr. Hiton was non-committal, but both he and Col. Reed were radiant with the success of the proceedings, and certainly both of these gentlemen had displayed great skill in conducting the case through all its stages; and while they were pleased with the honors and *éclat* which its success had brought them, they also with equal skill laid their plans to secure some of the spoils.

They looked on Leon as if he were a race horse whom they had entered and who had won the race through their jockeying.

The commission after due deliberation made a report to the effect that as Sinclair had been guilty of the grossest misconduct in the management of the

Pelon estate, he should surrender all of the estate and its increase, which the commission found to be something over \$10,000,000.

They further found that he should be punished by a fine of \$5,000,000; that the remaining \$1,000,000 he could keep on condition of his leaving the country inside of ten days.

General Sinclair had had enough experience with the directory and in two days he claimed his money, received it in gold, and started for foreign parts.

The commissioners then announced that they would hear claims which might be presented against the remaining \$10,000,000.

Col. Reed showed how he had directly and indirectly expended many million dollars in securing the conviction of Sinclair and securing the money. He said that if the commission gave him the whole of the \$10,000,000 it would not more than pay him for his trouble and expenses. "But," he said in an off-hand way, "I suppose the boy ought to have some of the money."

"Suppose you do this: give the boy \$1,000,000, and I will take the rest. Pay Mr. Hiton and we will give Hiton Sinclair's seat in the board of directors, and by the way, gentlemen," he added, "I would like to see you all at 'Starn Cliff,' to-morrow, where I propose to celebrate the victory; and if any of you get back in a week, you will be lucky."

The next day the commissioners so reported, and Leon was notified that \$1,000,000 was subject to his order.

Leon was rendered speechless for some seconds when he heard how the money was disposed of, but after a little reflection he considered himself lucky to get anything.

He called on Mr. Hiton and found that gentleman in the best of humor.

"Well, my boy," he said, "we pulled you through, didn't we?"

"Yes," said Leon, and with a wicked smile he added, "have you a bill against me?"

Mr. Hiton looked surprised for a moment, then he noticed the smile on Leon's face, and he burst into a hearty laugh as he said:

"No, no, my boy, I have no bill against you this time. There are cases where lawyers don't send bills; this is one of them. Allow me to congratulate you on your finding so generous a lawyer."

"What had I better do now?" asked Leon.

"Well, my boy," said the lawyer, "how do you like the country?"

"I don't like it," said Leon.

"Now," said Hiton, "if I didn't like a place I would leave it. But, if I were you, I would turn my money into gold—gold, nothing else, and leave the country. I would leave inside of one week. Nobody knows what may happen or how long you

can keep your money if you stay here, and working for a living is not pleasant, I believe."

Mr. Hiton gave Leon a meaning look as he finished.

"I understand," said Leon, "and I will do as you say."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A FLIRTATION WHICH COST ONE MILLION DOLLARS.

LEON did not leave Pactolus in a week nor in many months. He was kept dancing attendance on the different officers of the company day in and day out for weeks. Every day he had somewhere to go, some one to see, some one to wait for, and that some one generally disappointed him. In the mean time the plague had come upon the city.

He was now seeking to have certain stock of the company (preferred or directors' stock) transferred to him, but this business was surrounded by so much red tape that he thought he would never get through.

Hiton assured him that it was all right and nothing was needed but the formal transfer on the books of the company. But the trouble was to get the formal transfer.

Hiton also told him not to rest until the transfer was made, and Leon faithfully haunted the office of the company each day and waited as long as there was any prospect of doing anything.

He went to the office on Monday to see a Mr. Weeks who was to be there at ten o'clock in the morning. He waited until twelve and was then told

that Mr. Weeks would probably not be there that day.

“When can I see him?” asked Leon.

“Well,” said the clerk, “you had better come again to-morrow at the same hour.”

Leon came the next day at ten and was informed that Mr. Weeks had been there unusually early and had gone for the day.

“Had I not better leave a note making an appointment?” said Leon.

“Yes,” said the clerk, “I think you had.”

Leon left a polite note asking permission to see Mr. Weeks at ten o'clock the next morning or at such other time as Mr. Weeks might name.

The next day he called at nine o'clock and waited until noon. Then the clerk said to Leon:

“Mr. Cornhill was just in and said that Mr. Weeks went to Claymere last night and will not return until to-morrow.”

Leon was angry but he knew better than to give vent to his feelings in the office. He called on Mr. Hiton and expressed his mind to that gentleman and wound up by asking, “Is that the way to treat a fellow?”

“I don't think it is,” said Mr. Hiton smiling good-humoredly, “but you have doubtless learned before this that these gentlemen don't care much whether you like their manner of doing business or not.”

“But,” complained Leon, “they ought to say

whether they will make the transfer or not, at once, instead of keeping me dancing attendance on them day after day without result."

"There are lots of things that ought to be done and lots of things that ought not to be done," said the lawyer, dryly. "But your business and my business is not to reform the world. Your business just now is to get hold of one million dollars in stock of the company, and then to turn that stock into gold. Is that so?"

Leon nodded.

"Well," the lawyer went on, "if I were in your shoes, I should go there every day and every night for ten years if necessary, for, between you and me, a million dollars is worth working and waiting for. Now," he added seriously, "take my advice and haunt that office day and night until the stock is transferred to you, and then lose no time in turning it into gold."

Leon followed Mr. Hiton's advice and haunted the office of the company, and after innumerable vexations and delays, extending over six weeks, the transfer was made.

Leon was jubilant, and as he was returning home with the certificates in his pocket, he met Millicent and Maud Holt returning home hot and tired after ministering to some of the stricken laborers' families.

"Well, Millie," he said, "you don't look well. What is the matter?"

"There is nothing the matter with me," said the girl, "but I have been down in the laborers' district and, Leon, the suffering among those people almost drives me wild."

"Well, why do you go there, dear?" said Leon, tenderly. "You take too much risk and it wears you out; others should attend to that."

"But others don't and I must do what I can. It makes me heart-sick when I see how little I can do."

"Well, my girl, I fear for your health and your life," said Leon as they entered Millie's home. Then he looked into her resolute eyes as he said: "But I see it is useless to try to turn my darling from her duty and I shall not try; but, dear, suppose we were parted now after all our trials?"

"Do you think we would be any happier if we fled from our duty here like cowards?" she said earnestly.

"No, dear, I will not ask it; come what may we will stay at our post of duty,—but I wish you would go away and leave me here."

Millicent's answer was a sad smile as she shook her head.

"No, Leon," she said pointing towards the laborers' district, "sickness and distress is there in greater portion than those people can bear, and though we turn our backs and shut our eyes it is still there, and knowing that, how could I be happy unless each day I do the little I can to mitigate the suffering?"

Leon put his forefinger under the chin of the earnest face which was turned towards him, and raising it a little kissed the lips before Millicent knew what he intended.

The girl was surprised and blushed scarlet as she started back.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" she said, reproachfully.

"Do you know why I did that, Millie?" said Leon, smiling.

"Yes," she said; "because you are foolish."

"I suppose I am, but that isn't the reason; Millie, I have good news; they transferred my stock to my name to-day."

"Did they?" cried Millicent, clapping her hands. "Did they? Oh, I am so glad! and my poor boy had so much trouble and had to wait so long." Then putting her head one side coquettishly, she added: "I take it back, you were not foolish."

For reply Leon lifted the coquettish head to his several times and when he let it go it was very rosy.

And thus precious moments were passed and precious time was lost. Delicious moments they were and very costly.

Thus these lovers chatted and laughed and kissed the afternoon away.

They were three hours together—three hours of unalloyed happiness and they cost Leon one million dollars in gold.

Mr. Hiton had told him to lose no time in turning his stock into gold, and he fully intended to follow Mr. Hiton's advice and would have done so had he not met Millicent, but after he met her all thought of business went to sleep.

The next day he awoke with a terrible headache. He could not rise. He grew worse during the day and in the evening symptoms of the disease had developed themselves.

For many days Leon was in a delirious condition and he awoke one day to find Millicent anxiously watching for his returning reason.

Through weeks of pain, suffering, and delirium, Millicent nursed Leon until he recovered and grew strong and well.

The girl was indeed happy when she thought that the apprenticeship she had served among the suffering laborers had given her skill as a nurse which she was now able to exercise in behalf of her affianced husband.

When Leon arose pale and weak from his bed of sickness, the board of directors had fled and there was no way of having his stock changed into gold, and his stock each day became less valuable until finally it was almost worthless.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE AFFLICTED LABORERS MOVED LIKE GHOSTS.

THE disease spread rapidly and in a week assumed the form of an epidemic. But the directors paid no attention to it; they were too busy either with their money-making or their pleasure-seeking.

The directory quarter as it was called was in the upper part of the city. It was beautifully laid out and most of the houses had large gardens, many of them occupying a whole block.

Director Miller was the possessor of one of these beautiful city gardens as they were called.

On July 10th, his wife gave a garden party. The evening was warm and well suited to an out-door festival.

There was the customary display of gorgeous lanterns and colors festooned about the garden and there were colored fountains and music.

One of the guests, a young girl, in a spirit of fun slipped away from her companions and hid in a summer house.

She was laughing to herself as she heard her friends inquiring for her. As her eyes became accustomed to the comparative darkness of the place, she

saw something white on the opposite seat. As she gazed at it the object moved. Then she saw two glaring eyes and the object assumed the form of a man or a ghost.

The girl gave a shriek.

The object arose and moved to the door and stood in the doorway.

The girl gazed at the figure in an ecstasy of terror; then with a shriek fell in a swoon. Guests came rushing to the door.

They seized the intruder and dragged him to the light. He was a laborer, dressed in his night clothes. His face and neck were covered with red rings.

His eyes were listless and he appeared to be dazed.

As soon as his captors had brought him within range of the light, they released him with a cry of horror.

He stood in their midst as rigid as a statue.

The guests were hurrying from all parts of the garden and they crowded around staring at the strange figure.

“What is the matter?”

“Who is it?”

“What is he doing here?”

“How did he get in?”

“What is the matter with his face?”

“He must have some disease?”

“It’s the plague,” cried a doctor.

There was a cry of horror. In an instant the

crowd broke up and scattered in every direction, leaving the man standing alone.

The disease produced a remarkable effect on the sufferers. The poor wretches would get up in the night and steal away from their homes and, guided by some strange instinct, go straight to the directors' quarters.

There they would wander into the summer houses or climb on to the piazzas and verandas. They would force their way into vestibules; they would lie upon the stoops. Oftentimes when the front doors were opened in the morning a stricken laborer would fall into the hall either dead or dying.

Sometimes they got into cellars and by that means effected an entrance to the houses. Sometimes they were even found lying in the bedrooms of the directors. Wherever they went they carried the disease.

These unfortunate wretches moved like ghosts. They uttered no sound. They seemed to be in a half unconscious condition. They made no resistance when apprehended and went wherever they were led or were directed. They could not be driven away.

The directory were becoming alarmed at the progress the plague was making. Some of them suggested measures of relief.

Mr. Hiton, now in the board, spoke earnestly in favor of helping the unfortunate laborers; he

recommended that the directory make an appropriation for the purpose of improving the laborers' quarters.

Other members scconded his suggestion, and warned the board of the danger of delay.

There were three kinds of people who opposed action in the matter. There were those who would not hesitate to spend fifty thousand dollars on an evening's entertainment, but who would fight like tigers against spending one hundred dollars for necessary repairs of the machinery in the company's factories. These people even grudged the small sums needed to keep their own homes in repair.

Their extravagance exhausted their vast incomes oftentimes long before dividends were payable.

Another class were the money hoarders who hated to part with money for any purpose.

Still another class were those who would have been willing to help the people had they not revolted, but that episode was fresh in their minds and they refused to help such "ingrates" as they called the laborers.

"The more they suffer," said one of the latter, "the less likely they will be to rebel against constituted authority."

Another, speaking in the same spirit—a religious man by the way—said:

"I regard this affliction as a judgment from Heaven, visited upon this wicked people, and I hope

they may learn the lesson from it never again to resist the company or its rules."

Another gentleman observed:

"These people are ungrateful; the more you do for them, the less they will thank you."

"Help to these people would be like putting a premium on rebellion," said Mr. Mayhew in the course of his speech.

The measure was voted down.

It was after this decision that the disease took the form which caused the afflicted laborers to steal away from their homes and invade the directory quarter of the city. It is difficult to say what impelled these half-insane sufferers to seek the directory quarters, but probably they were governed by a sort of instinct which urged them to leave their own stifling quarters and get into the pure atmosphere of the directory quarter.

They always came in the dead of the night and each night the number increased until they seemed to swarm all over that quarter.

One evening a cordon of officers was placed on guard to prevent the invasion. But the sufferers managed to get by them and there were more than ever of the sick and dying in the directory quarters in the morning.

Director Mayhew went to his room a day or two after the affair at the garden party. He was disturbed in his mind about the progress of the disease,

He feared that the directory were making a mistake. He was in terror lest the epidemic should find lodgment in the directory quarter. "Yet," he said to himself, "everything about the quarter is in a healthy condition and the sewerage is perfect."

Still he had his misgivings and if it were not for the pride of opinion he would have recommended that relief be extended to the poor people.

The evening was warm, and before going to bed he opened his window wide.

This director had a beautiful house. All up the sides vines grew and one of them came up to his window.

The air was laden with the breath of fragrant flowers, but the director did not sleep well.

About one o'clock there was a noise outside—a rustle of leaves and a shaking of the vine. This was not caused by the wind, for there was not a breath of air stirring.

In a few seconds the hand of a man appeared above the window sill, a head followed. It was horribly marked with livid rings. The hand reached over the window sill and a man pulled himself into the room. He was one of the stricken laborers. He stood in the window like a statue with his eyes turned towards the bed. He stood thus for several minutes, then he moved stealthily towards the bed.

He crept into it without heeding the position of

the director, and he laid his head on Mayhew's breast.

The director awoke with a start. He grappled with the intruder.

The man turned his face and the director gave a scream of horror. He broke away from the man and ran towards the door. The man followed. The door was locked and the director in his agitated condition could not turn the key. He dropped it on the floor. The man put his hand out as if to help him, at the same time placing his other hand on his shoulder.

Mayhew shook the hand off with a shudder and moved quickly away. The man followed slowly.

"Keep off!" cried Mayhew in terror. "Keep off!"

The man paid no heed.

Wherever Mayhew went he followed slowly. Whenever he reached him he put his hand on Mayhew's head or shoulders.

Mayhew struck him once or twice but the man paid no attention to that. He kept following Mayhew round and round the room; generally he moved slowly, but sometimes he moved forward with a quick gliding motion which would bring him right beside Mayhew like a flash.

Mayhew did not dare turn his eyes away from the horrible apparition.

The man's appearance was so ghastly, so horrible,

so unnatural, that every moment Mayhew's horror increased.

His blood seemed to freeze. He lost the power of speech and only moved about mechanically. If he turned his eyes for a moment the man glided to his side on the instant.

Whenever he came close to Mayhew he put his left hand on his arm or on his shoulder or head or face, in a peculiar and unnatural manner. His eyes were as devoid of expression as though he were dead or blind.

He never said a word or uttered a sound and were it not for a peculiar noise he made in breathing, Mayhew would have believed that he was being pursued by a dead man.

Round and round the room Mayhew went, followed by the man.

His main thought was to keep the man away—to prevent him from touching him. The icy hand of the man struck a chill through him.

As he went round the room, he tried to prevent the man coming near him by putting chairs and tables between them, but the man glided round them with the ease of a snake.

Mayhew undertook to run, but the instant his back was turned he felt the horrible pressure of the man's dead, cold hand on his shoulder.

He uttered a shuddering cry of horror as he shook off the hand.

He turned and faced the man and as he stepped backward he cried in an almost inarticulate voice:

“What do you want?”

No answer.

“Who are you?”

No answer.

“Leave me alone!”

No answer.

The man stood as immovable as a statue. His eyes were turned towards Mayhew, but he did not seem to see him.

Mayhew's mind was in a tumult of agony and terror—the awful terror of uncertainty.

“What is the man?” “Who is he?” “What does he want?”

“He carries the plague with him and he is transmitting it to me.” These thoughts rushed through Mayhew's mind.

Mayhew felt that the man was trying to get a grip on him, so that he could inoculate him with the plague by breathing on him.

Several times the man tried to embrace him as if he intended to kiss him.

The thought of such a thing set every nerve tingling with repulsion.

If the man had been violent or noisy it would have been a relief. But he was docile and unresisting.

He seemed to have as little motive as a fish in a

glass globe and he glided about the room in an aimless, purposeless manner.

His every movement seemed to say: "I will be your shadow."

"If I could only get out of the room," said Mayhew in a whisper.

He moved towards the door and dropped on his knees to find the key.

The man was beside him on the instant and assisted him in the search. One hand he put on Mayhew's shoulder; at the touch Mayhew went down with a shudder and wrenched himself free.

He scrambled to his feet and ran to the other side of the room.

The man picked up the key and held it out to Mayhew, following him around the room with the key in his hand.

"If I could only get it," said Mayhew.

And yet he was afraid to take it.

The man holding it towards him followed him round and round the room.

"I must," said Mayhew, and he snatched the key. He dropped it as though it had stung him.

The key was so cold that it sent a chill through him.

He did not attempt to pick it up nor did the man.

He again tried to call for help, but his vocal cords seemed paralyzed.

He tried to get to the bell, but the man always

got in front of it and stood there patiently and passively.

Each moment Mayhew's horror of his visitor increased.

He could not bring his reason into play. He could not control his mind.

He could only think: "There is a repulsive presence in the room which I must get rid of or get away from."

The feeling of repulsion grew upon him each time the creature touched him, until in an ecstasy of agony his reason seemed about to give way under the strain.

These two men had been around the room a hundred times. They now stood facing each other.

Mayhew was filled with loathing as he looked at the hideous face, but he durst not turn his head, and more by instinct than reason he kept his eyes fixed on the face of the intruder.

Suddenly there was a noise—one of those inexplicable noises which we hear in the silent watches of the night. It was probably the cracking of a piece of furniture or of a beam in the wall; or it might have been a rat or a mouse, but it was a sharp sound, and in the dead stillness it was exaggerated.

It struck on the strained nerves of Mayhew in a way that seemed to tear them.

He could not help it; he turned his head in the direction of the sound.

Like a flash his visitor was upon him. He took Mayhew in his arms and placed his ice-cold lips against his cheeks.

The double shock must have dethroned Mayhew's reason.

He grappled with the man and tried to push him away.

The man clung to him with a tenacity that was terrible.

Round and round the room they struggled, Mayhew trying to get away, the intruder holding him; Mayhew pushing him away, the intruder clinging to him.

Neither of the men uttered a word.

Mayhew was backing and trying to get away. The intruder followed, with his face almost touching his.

Mayhew made a misstep and fell backwards, pulling the intruder on top of him. The intruder lurched to one side as he fell and released his hold.

In a moment Mayhew broke away and rushed for the window.

He climbed out, caught hold of the trailing vines, and let himself down to the ground.

The intruder followed and ran after him.

Several days after, the bodies of Mayhew and the intruder were found miles away, floating in a pond.

They were locked in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XL.

WILMOT IN A TANGLE OF LOVE.

IN the haste of his flight and during the progress of the impeachment proceedings, Sinclair seems to have forgotten or ignored Lizzie—Lizzie, the charming; Lizzie, the lovable; Lizzie with the dimpled chin and dimpled cheeks and dimpled shoulders; Lizzie with the soft brown hair with a ripple in it and a gleam of gold; Lizzie with the soft brown eyes with a little spark in them; Lizzie with the soft brown eyes with a spark in them that coaxed and pleaded their way into every heart; Lizzie with her confidential chat and confiding ways which seemed to make for her a nestling place in the warmest side of every one she met.

In his hour of trouble Sinclair forgot this companion.

He had sent her to "Crest Lawn," one of the finest estates and most beautiful cottages in the country. Here she had entertained in his absence in a way that made "Crest Lawn" the most popular of out-of-town resorts.

Augustus Wilmot was one of the most frequent visitors at the cottage. He never disguised his admiration for "her grace" as he always called Lizzie.

His attentions were of the most polite and most respectful nature. He never attempted any freedom, for any attempt at familiarity with Lizzie was rebuked with a surprised look.

She made no scene, neither did she become angry. She simply looked surprised and the most audacious intruder stood back. After such an encounter she would win the intruder's gratitude by ignoring his misconduct and putting him at his ease.

At the time of Sinclair's impeachment, Wilmot and a number of Sinclair's friends were at the cottage.

The news of the impeachment was a great surprise to them, but they with one accord agreed to make light of it before Lizzie so that she might be "saved needless pain," as one of the guests put it.

On the eve of his departure, Sinclair thought of Lizzie, but only as a burden of which in a selfish way he wished to rid himself, and that as cheaply as possible. So he wrote to her that he was going abroad and the chances were that he would never return; that he regretted exceedingly being obliged to leave her, but that it was out of his power to do otherwise; that he had met with many misfortunes. As a postscript he added that he would give her some of what little money he had left, and he inclosed a company note for \$2,000

Selfish as he was, Sinclair's conscience smote him as he wrote that letter. He felt that he was leaving the girl helpless and alone. It was like deserting a

foundling in the wilderness or in a great city which was as bad.

Lizzie he knew could never make her living and he believed the poor girl must of necessity go heart-broken and perhaps starve.

These thoughts rushed through his mind as he wrote the letter, but he brushed them aside with the remark: "I can't take care of everybody who is unfortunate. I can't support the whole world. Lizzie must look out for herself. It is every man for himself in this world."

Then through the miles of space which separated them he saw Lizzie's lovable face, her winning smile, her pleading look, and he tore open the envelope and put in the \$2,000 note.

Poor Lizzie was dumfounded when she saw the letter and its inclosure. She carried them to Wilmot or "Gus" as she called him.

"What does it mean?" she burst out impetuously.

Wilmot was astounded as he read the letter, and his astonishment was accompanied by a thrill of joy, for instantly the idea occurred to him that he might become Lizzie's protector.

"I am afraid," he answered, "that this letter speaks the truth. You will never see him again in all probability."

"Why?" she cried eagerly.

Wilmot made half a dozen explanations before he could satisfy her.

She wanted to know if Sinclair was in trouble or in danger, or in want. If she could not go to him; if she could not help him (Sinclair would as soon have asked a canary bird to help him) and in a hundred different ways she expressed concern for Sinclair's welfare, until at last by slow degrees she learned that he had deserted her, but Wilmot colored and softened the truth in so many ways that the girl's feelings were not hurt and she recognized the separation as inevitable.

With wonderful tact and skill and great patience Wilmot succeeded getting Lizzie to permit him to provide for her. He certainly had a strong affection for her, and she found him so companionable that she said:

"I like to have you around." In fact they were great chums.

She liked the cottage at Crest Lawn and he bought it for her use. He also bought a house in the city which he likewise placed at her disposal.

From a material standpoint and so far as her surroundings were concerned, Lizzie suffered no change.

Wilmot treated her as if she were a distinguished friend. He always asked permission before he called upon her.

After a time he found that she had so entwined herself around his affections that he was uneasy and uncomfortable when he was away from her. His thoughts were constantly hovering around her. Her

sayings and movements were always floating through his mind. Oftentimes, it mattered not what he might be doing, he would stop and sit or stand gazing into vacancy.

At such times he saw Lizzie as he had last seen her, or was listening to some of her sayings.

One day he was talking with a friend and his mind wandered to Lizzie and he seemed to forget the presence. His friend became nettled and burst out, "Are you in love?"

Wilmot stammered an apology.

When his friend left him he said to himself: "Am I in love?"

He called on Lizzie that evening and as he gazed at the table in a fit of abstraction, she sat beside him on the sofa and taking his head in her hands, looked into his eyes as she said:

"Oh, what a serious face! Who gave it to you?"

He smiled: "I'm afraid you did, my little girl."

"I! Why should I give you such a serious face?"

He looked at her in a loving way, then she added:

"Come speak up, why?"

"Because—I love you and I want to make you my wife. Lizzie, will you—will you make me happy?"

This speech rushed through his mind in a second, but as he uttered the word "because" something caused him to stop. His better judgment suddenly

awakened and stood between him and the folly he was about to commit.

With his surroundings, how could he marry Lizzie? It would bring down upon him the wrath of his relatives, the sneers of his friends, and the ridicule of his acquaintances.

These thoughts struck upon his senses like the harsh clang of a gong, and for a second he was stupefied.

Very slowly his mind recovered its balance; then he gently disentangled himself from Lizzie's arms and as he arose and took his hat to go, she spoke:

"Are you going so soon?" with a pout.

The words turned him round and towards her, and as his eyes came in contact with hers full of eloquent pleading (for she divined that he was in trouble and her sympathies were aroused) he felt himself drawn to her as to a magnet. His will power seemed to leave him, and he began to move towards her—his cane fell with a jarring sound and the spell was broken.

"I'll have to go now, dear," he said in a hesitating voice. "I—I'll call again soon. Good-night."

"Good-night," she said; "come soon and tell me your trouble."

In the street the cool air revived him. He took a deep breath.

"Ah," he said, "what a lucky escape. I wonder if she understood what I meant? I must be care-

ful," he added. "I must stop such nonsense. It would never do.

"But she is a charming creature. There are none like her in my set." Then he said determinedly, "No, no, it would never do. One thing is certain: I must keep away from her."

All night he lay awake. Once or twice he dozed fitfully. Several times during the next day he found himself going towards Lizzie's house, and only by a violent effort he wrenched himself away.

"I must keep away," he said.

Again he passed an almost sleepless night.

"I'm a fool," he said fiercely. "I'll fix this matter quickly. I'll take a trip to Grand Ledge. That will shake this nonsense out of me."

Grand Ledge was a town in a distant part of the country.

That afternoon he started for Grand Ledge. All the afternoon he travelled and all the night.

The train sped rapidly away from the great city and away from Lizzie. But Lizzie was with him all the time. He tried to read, tried to sleep, tried to look at the scenery or at his fellow-passengers, but Lizzie was in his mind all the time. All his efforts to change his thoughts were useless.

Early in the morning he arose, washed and dressed himself. The train came to a halt in the depot of a large town. He went out and walked up and down

the platform. A train came in from the opposite direction.

He said to a station employee, "Where is that train going?"

"To Pactolus," said the man.

Wilmot continued walking up and down. He looked wistfully at the train. He walked up to it.

His valet came up to him: "Shall I order your breakfast, sir?"

"Yes."

"All aboard," called the conductor of the train.

"Stay," said Wilmot to the valet, "I'm going back; return with the luggage."

He jumped on the train and by midnight he was home again.

"What nonsense," he said. "I need not go to see Lizzie, even if I am in the city."

Next day at noon he found himself standing at the corner nearest to Lizzie's house. He stood there for a long time, then he walked around the block.

"I wonder if she will come out," he said; but she did not.

That night he walked by the house. There was a light in the parlor. He stood under the window. He heard Lizzie's voice, then her laugh. Then he heard a man's voice, then Lizzie's merry laugh rang out again, and the man's laugh joined hers.

Wilmot became wild with jealousy and he rushed away.

"I'll never go near her house again," he repeated over and over again. "I'll turn her out of the house. I'll turn her adrift, I'll——" Wilmot stopped short.

"Why?"

The question seemed to block his way. He stood still in the street.

"Why?" "Why?" "Why?" "Why?"

The questions seemed to come from every direction. They seemed piled up in front of him. He blushed.

"She has never said an unkind word to me. No human being has ever shown me more kindness or contributed as much to my happiness. The poor girl shall never want while I live, nor if I die."

In the morning he went to his lawyer and had an irrevocable deed drawn which insured Lizzie a liberal income for life.

"Now," said Wilmot, "I will not bother the girl any more."

That night he again found himself in front of Lizzie's house. It was brilliantly lighted. He could hear voices and music.

Again he was overcome by jealousy. He rang the bell and was admitted.

There were a number of people in the parlor, and there was a loud buzz of conversation.

Wilmot stood in the parlor doorway for a moment.

"Why, there's Gus!" came the voice of Lizzie,

and she came pushing her way through the crowd to meet him.

"Why, you bad fellow, where have you been? I thought I would never see you again. Come in here," and she took his arm and led him into an ante-room. She pushed him on to a sofa and sat beside him.

"Oh, what a pale face! What's the matter? Won't you tell me? Never mind, I won't ask if you don't want me to know."

She passed her hand gently over his forehead.

"Poor fellow," with a suppressed sob, and her eyes filled with tears.

Wilmot was overcome by his emotions. He attempted to rise. Lizzie twisted her fingers into the lapel of his coat and held him down.

"No, no," she whispered, "not yet—so soon," looking at him appealingly.

"I must go now," he said in an agitated voice as he tried to unfasten her fingers.

"Please, not so soon; you have only been here a minute."

"I must go now, I'll come to-morrow."

"Will you—true?"

He nodded.

"What time?"

"At three o'clock."

"No, at twelve o'clock. Come to lunch."

"All right."

"Will you?" she cried clapping her hands, while her face beamed the happiest of smiles.

He nodded and his face caught her smile.

"Now you are looking happy again."

"At lunch," said Wilmot, and he broke away and went home with his heart fairly bubbling with happiness.

At twelve o'clock to the minute Wilmot was at Lizzie's door. Lizzie came tripping to meet him the moment he entered.

"My poor fellow," she said as she drew him into the parlor.

Lizzie looked so bewitchingly pretty that Wilmot took a deep breath as he paused to admire her.

Without saying a word he put his hand on her shoulder and turned her around.

"Do you think I look pretty?" she said simply.

"Beautiful!" he exclaimed.

"Beautiful!" he repeated several times.

"Isn't that nice," she said clapping her hands.

She went up to him and put her hands on his shoulders:

"Will I tell you a secret?" she whispered.

"Yes," replied he in a whisper.

"Well, I wanted to look pretty for you."

She had prepared the daintiest of lunches, but Wilmot only pretended to nibble to please her, while his eyes followed her every movement with an hun-

gry, eager look. His was the hunger of the heart rather than the stomach.

Lizzie chatted and prattled in her happy way with her musical voice, while she daintily picked at the viands like a bird.

"Now," she said when lunch was finished, "I'm going to have a good, long look at you." And she led him into her boudoir.

"There, now, is the softest and easiest chair. You can be as lazy as you like."

This was said laughingly. Then her manner suddenly changed as she sat on the arm of the chair. She turned her face towards him full of earnest pleading.

"You will stay a long time, won't you?"

"Yes," he said, "you sweet girl, I will."

"Oh, good, good!" she cried, clapping her hands. "Now, I will get you a rose to put in your button-hole," and she danced out of the room.

"What a fool I am," muttered Wilmot, fiercely. "Where can I find a woman who can compare with her either in my set or in any society?"

When she came back with the tiniest of rosebuds, he submitted to being decorated. Then he said suddenly:

"Lizzie, I want to say something to you."

She looked at him with wide staring eyes. "Is it serious?"

"Yes, very serious."

"I don't like to listen to serious things, but I don't care, I will if you want me to. What is it?"

"Lizzie, I want you to be my wife."

She looked at him and shook her head as if she did not understand. Then she said in a dreary sort of way:

"Forever and ever?"

"Yes," he cried eagerly; "yes, forever. I love you, Lizzie, and I can't live without you. I can't, I can't."

The last words almost seemed like a cry.

Lizzie was very pale; she stood by his chair staring into vacancy for more than a minute; then she said slowly as though waking from a dream:

"Do you think I can make you happy?"

"Yes," he said quickly, "if you can be happy with me?"

"Yes," she murmured, and she fell into his arms with a sigh.

Within a few days they were married.

The announcement was received with horror by the set in which Wilmot moved, and the scandal-mongers had an active trade.

Wilmot's only reply was:

"I married to please myself, and if anybody thinks they have a right to object, I am sorry I can't think as they do."

CHAPTER XLI.

THEY CAME TO THE DIRECTORS' QUARTER—TO
DIE.

ONE morning it was whispered among the directory that Chester Wood, one of the richest men in the company, was afflicted with the malady.

Official inquiry was had and the report confirmed.

A committee having charge of the sanitary affairs of the quarter, established a strict quarantine around Mr. Wood's palace. They also made rigid sanitary rules.

Two days after, the malady entered the houses of other directors.

Do what they would, the sanitary committee could not keep the afflicted laborers out of their quarters.

The poor wretches still continued night after night to wander into the gardens and even into the houses of the directors.

The awful spectacle of these dead or dying men and women in their gardens and doorways and houses almost drove the women of the directory frantic.

"Can nothing be done to keep them away?" they said.

But the only answers were worried looks on the faces of the questioned.

At first the sanitary committee simply drove the trespassers out, but as the numbers increased and the warnings of the committee were unheeded, orders were given to shoot them on sight.

This was an added horror to the doomed directors and their families, and the order was rescinded after one night's trial.

All of the guards were armed with repeating rifles and instructed to challenge and shoot every laborer who approached the quarter.

"That will stop them," said one of the committee with a grim smile. But it did not stop them.

The guards were well disciplined machines. They had no discretion and they obeyed orders to the letter.

At about ten o'clock what was known as the southwest end of the quarter was startled by the report of a rifle which rang out with startling distinctness on the stillness of the night.

"Ha," said one of the directors, "that is business!"

"That will stop them," said another with a chuckle.

The shot was followed by a shriek; then there were several sharp reports followed by yells of a most unearthly character.

Then again was heard shouting and screaming in different parts of the quarter. Every little while

the horrified dwellers in the quarter heard shots fired followed by shouting and screaming.

All night long this was kept up and the people in the directors' quarter had no sleep.

The sanitary committee's order to shoot all intruders on sight was followed to the letter and without mercy.

The afflicted laborers began stealing into this quarter at a little before ten o'clock.

They had been invariably undemonstrative and peaceful; they resisted nothing; they could be led anywhere, but when they heard the report of the first gun, they became perfect demons. The noise seemed to drive them frantic.

They rushed at the guards with such impetuosity that they felled them at once; in many instances disarmed them and beat them to death with clubbed rifles. Some of the intruders fell dead at the first shot; others were only wounded and they ran screaming and shouting through the streets, oftentimes climbing over garden walls and rushing into the doorways of the directors' homes. Here they would scream and shout and yell while they tried to force their way through the doorway, crying:

"Let us in!"

"Oh, let us in!"

Some of them climbed on to the balconies and dashed through the glass doors and rushed into the houses lacerated and covered with blood.

One of them climbed over a hall door and crashed through the fanlight. He rushed up-stairs in a frenzy. He attacked the owner of the house, biting him and tearing him with his nails and teeth while the family and servants stood almost helplessly by. It is true that two of the more courageous servants tried to pull the madman away, but it was too late to save their master. The monster only left the dying master to attack the servants, then the women of the house ran screaming away.

The screams attracted his attention; he paused a second, then he left his second victim lying on the floor and pursued the women.

Happily they got into a room and had the door safely locked before he reached them.

He flung himself against the door in baffled rage.

Again and again he beat upon the door in a vain effort to break it down. Suddenly he noticed the fanlight and in a moment he had climbed up to it and dashed the transom into the room with a crash. He forced his head through and glared at the cowering women like a wild beast.

He did not seem to see the women huddled together in a corner. There were nine of them. His eyes looked as though they were sightless and without intelligence, but he seemed to know of their presence.

No one would have recognized in this group of abject, cowering women, the gorgeously dressed

ladies who a few hours before were haughtily giving commands to retinues of servants or who were warmly and heartlessly approving of the murderous way in which the sanitary committee proposed to rid the quarter of intruding laborers.

The distance between arrogant power and cowering suppliance is oftentimes but a step.

Here was a group of the richest, most powerful and most arrogant women in the whole world kneeling in suppliant attitude before a miserable wretch whom they would not have turned their bejewelled heads to look at one hour before.

The frenzied trespasser managed to work his head and one arm through the transom, but fortunately it was several inches too narrow to admit the passage of his body.

It was a fearful spectacle for these delicately nurtured women.

This caricature of the human face divine with all the divine eliminated, cheeks bloated, eyes blood-shot, mouth foaming, hair and face smeared with blood.

He was strong, this monster, and he struggled hard to get through the aperture, and as he struggled the framework of the door creaked and strained and trembled and from time to time it seemed on the point of yielding.

He was patient, this monster, for he tried a number of ways to force his way in. He withdrew after

a time and several of the ladies relieved from the strain fell in a faint.

The relief did not last long, for soon he was heard outside the door again. He put some heavy article of furniture on the outside. It was a table. It gave him a purchase for his feet and again the hideous head protruded itself through the transom.

He was persistent. He pressed, he twisted, he struggled and got through inch by inch like a snake.

He was silent—not a word did he say, nor did he utter a sound save hard breathing which told of his strenuous exertions.

Some of the servants had run to their neighbors and begged assistance, but the neighbors had all they could do to guard their own homes, for they did not know at what moment one or more of the laborers would come dashing against their own doors or windows.

Self-protection was the first law with them and every man for himself was their motto.

The guard when appealed to refused to leave their posts, as they were bound by the strictest orders to remain where they were stationed.

All night long this horrible object hung over the doorway while the women gazed at it in an ecstasy of terror.

The sight became so horrifying that one of the women, finding herself beside the electric light key, turned off the light.

This was a relief, for anything seemed better than looking at the face of the struggling man in the transom. The relief was only momentary, for the noise of his struggle and the straining of the woodwork became exaggerated in the darkness to such an extent that the women imagined that the door frame was giving way and after a few seconds one of the women whispered:

“Turn on the light.”

Hour after hour the women cowered trembling in the corner with their terror-stricken faces turned towards the intruder.

How this patient madman struggled to get through the transom! After a time he got so far in that he could not get back.

In the morning some of the servants came to the rescue and when they pulled the intruder out he was a corpse. When the relief did come, not one of the women in that room had strength enough to stand.

They were carried to their beds.

One young girl went into the room with jet black hair, and when they carried her out in the morning her hair was white. Two of the ladies were out of their minds, and not one of them ever recovered from the shock.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE SOFT BREEZE CARRIED THE PLAGUE TO THE
DIRECTORY.

ONE night of such horrors was enough for the directors' quarte

For years after, a mere passing thought of its terrors made the residents shudder.

The very first thing the residents did was to hasten to the rooms of the sanitary committee and implore them to revoke their order.

"What will we do, gentlemen?" said the chairman of the committee helplessly. "We must keep these villains out. How will we do it?"

"Not in the way you tried last night," answered one of the directors hotly.

"I would not pass another such night for a million dollars," said another.

The colonel of the guards appeared and saluted the chairman.

"Have you a report?" asked the chairman.

"I have, your excellency," responded the colonel referring to some memoranda.

"Well?" said the chairman impatiently.

"We killed forty prowlers, and——" the colonel hesitated.

"Well, anything else?"

"Some of the residents were—were killed."

"Well, how many?"

"There is a list," replied the colonel holding out a piece of paper.

"How many?" shouted the chairman in a harsh voice.

"Thirty-two," said the colonel.

This was followed by an exclamation of dismay and the visitors crowded around the chairman's desk while one of the committee read the list of the residents who were killed.

One of the visiting directors resumed the discussion by saying, "No matter what we do or what occurs, we must not have such another night as last."

"No, no, no!" shouted nearly every one in the room.

"We must remember," the speaker continued, "that we are not dealing with rational beings. These prowlers are madmen and carry with them no sense of responsibility. They take no heed of their own lives or the lives of others. Therefore we must deal with them as with irresponsible beings as we would with unreasoning animals. Which is the proper way to deal with them I confess is beyond my powers of solution."

The committee went into executive session and revoked what was known as the "shooting order."

Then long and wearily they discussed the problem of how to keep the prowlers out of the quarter and to stop the spread of the epidemic.

They resolved on two courses of action; one was to stretch a double cordon of sentinels all around the quarter and keep them there night and day.

The other was to thin the city's population out by shipping large numbers of laborers out into the country until the epidemic should have spent itself. About 50,000 families were so shipped and they created a number of little villages.

Matters were becoming serious owing to the epidemic. Work in the factories was almost suspended and many of the laborers were without means of support. They began to suffer for lack of food. Then urged by hunger they clamored at the warehouses for food.

Many of the guards were sick and it was an easy matter for the hungry laborers to help themselves; and having done it once and found it easy, they did it again and, although these depredations were reported to the directory, and although some of the hot-headed members advocated immediate and severe punishment of the "thieves," wiser counsels prevailed and the board simply ignored the "pilfering of provisions" as one of the members put it.

"It certainly is stealing," he said, "and thieves should be punished. But when men cannot earn their living they must eat to live and they must get

food. They will not starve peaceably. Men will get food by force if they cannot get it legitimately, and you cannot administer punishment to men by the thousands. The best way to treat this matter is to simply ignore it—try to keep it within bounds until this awful visitation is past.”

Thousands upon thousands of people were shipped into the country, but always far removed from the country seats of the directors.

Then there arose a still greater cause for alarm. The epidemic was slowly but surely spreading in the directory quarter. Three times the sanitary committee said they had stamped it out; but it did not stay stamped out.

The dwellers in this favored quarter at first felt themselves absolutely secure from the invasion of any disease or epidemic. Then when one or two residents caught the disease, they became uneasy. As the number of sufferers increased they became alarmed.

But why did they not leave the infected city and go out into the pure open air which they could find at their beautiful country seats?

There was a reason and a good reason. It was not because they were brave and were willing to face the dangers of the epidemic with their stricken people—or that they might minister to their needs.

These were not the reasons for their lingering in the doomed city. They were afraid to leave it. They

were afraid of the laborers. They were afraid of each other.

They feared violence from the people and treachery from each other. For in that board of directory there were constant plottings and counterplottings.

Scarce a director knew whom he could trust and so they felt that they must be on the guard and constantly on the alert.

If they left the city for a week or two they might find themselves unseated and deprived of their rights; to the importunities of their families urging them to flee they had but one answer, uttered in a whisper:

“I must remain in the city to protect my interests.”

Every member had his enemies who were ever on the alert to strike him down.

It was of no avail to leave for a day or two.

Many tried that but only returned to be stricken down by the disease.

Up from the stricken laborers' district came the disease-laden air like myriads of loathsome serpents.

The soft, sweet south wind came laden with the disease.

The east wind dallied with the disease. The west wind dallied with it; the north wind drove it out, but always some of the disease remained.

The sanitary committee tried to combat the disease with disinfectants, but the soft south wind would come and the disinfectants were as chaff be-

fore this gentle breeze, which carried with it a freight of death.

The board of directors saw the disease striking their members one by one, and they became panic-stricken.

They met and passed a resolution to suspend all business for a period of three months.

They also made the most thorough arrangements for a radical improvement in the sanitary condition of the laborers' district, including their dwellings and workshops.

Then they left the doomed city in hot haste, but even as they made their preparations to depart the soft southern wind went through the laborers' districts, picked up the germs of disease and carried it into every corner of the sumptuous homes of the directors.

It wafted the disease into the folds of the rich garments and hangings and furnishings and it deposited its terrible freight in the trunks of the fleeing directors.

Every railroad and out-going boat was loaded with panic-stricken men and women fleeing from the terrible disease which was the result of their own greed and heartless cruelty.

Once out of the infected city the fugitives took grateful breaths of the soft pure air and congratulated themselves on their escape, never once caring for the poor wretches they had left behind.

They scattered to their several beautiful suburban houses and that night in the sweet country air many of them got the first unbroken sleep they had known for weeks, and as morning broke with all its charm of light and sweet odors and song of bird, many a director said,

“Truly the world is made for the rich.”

Elaborate preparations were made for amusements, and the trunks were opened and the germs of disease came out and they fastened upon these people and upon their servants.

One by one the household would be stricken down until in some instances every member of the household, from the oldest to the youngest, was suffering from the epidemic.

Families with great retinues of servants would lie in their beds with no one to minister to their wants.

The directors had arrogantly forbidden laborers living within stated distances of their country seats and in their need they could not call upon them for help.

The laborer in the city had some kindly hand to minister to his wants, but the director in many instances died for want of the simplest aid.

In their delirium many of them stole out of their houses and were lost in the woods and died from exposure.

The president left the city with the others. He early saw that the neglect and cruelty of the company was a fatal error.

Too late he saw that men and women must have a certain amount of good air, food and clothing to keep in a healthy condition; that unless in a healthy condition men and women were of very little use in the industrial world.

When too late he had tried to improve the sanitary condition of the laborers' quarter.

To better their dwellings and to better their physical condition by lessening their hours of labor and allowing them better food or rather better wages.

But he received very little support from the other directors.

He had not anticipated an epidemic, and when the epidemic came he believed with his colleagues that it would be confined to the laborers' districts. He was as much surprised at the ultimate result as were the other members of the board.

He had suggested the reform partly from humane motives and partly on the broad ground of expediency, with a view of getting better work from the laborers because of their improved physical condition.

He had viewed with alarm the horrible havoc the disease was making among the laborers and he was conscience-stricken at the awful consequences of the company's cruelty and neglect. And now he, in his palace in one of the fairest valleys of the country, was also stricken down with the disease.

As he felt the disease taking hold of his faculties

his mind worked in channels which were new to it. As his muscular tissues relaxed the hardness of his mentality appeared to soften and a great spring of sympathy seemed to gush forth.

There are intellectual men who are gentle, kind and sympathetic.

There are intellectual men who are rigid, selfish and brutal.

The disease took its usual course with the president. One day he would be physically prostrated and another he would be in a condition of the most extraordinary health and spirits.

At such times he would arise and call around him some of his most trusted lieutenants and dispatch business with a celerity which amazed them, but it frequently happened that in the middle of an order or a dictation, he would fall into a comatose state and remain delirious for hours.

Were it not for the vigilance of his attendants he would have escaped from the house and perhaps have met the fate of many others.

It was after one of these fits that he summoned about one hundred of the directors and called a meeting in the theatre connected with his palace, and amid the gorgeous surroundings he said:

“Gentlemen: After mature consideration I have concluded that for the good of the country and for our own good we must dissolve the company.”

The effect of these words on the directors present

was electrical. There was a movement of the whole body followed by suppressed exclamation.

"The president is insane," said every man to himself.

The president went on calmly:

"Bitter experience has taught us that we cannot control the destinies of this country in the narrow, selfish way in which we have been doing it.

"It is contrary to all law and contrary to nature. I once believed that it might be done and I am now free to say that I am not sorry that it has failed. For five years I have had but one object in mind and that was the forwarding of the interests of the company, and in that interest I have sacrificed humanity and country and forgotten everything for the company.

"I believed it would be a success. I believe it was a success. I hoped it would continue a success and I did not care what suffering it entailed on humanity.

"The ferocious spirit of cruelty and indifference to suffering which has been displayed by the directory and——"

He paused—"its president, is most horrible to contemplate and has scarcely a parallel in history.

"Rigid repression of the people was the only system under which the company could be maintained. Let there be the slightest relaxation of these repressive measures and the people will sweep the company away with the same resistless force which a moun-

tain torrent carries with it when it breaks through a dam.

“To-day the epidemic has left the company and its forces in a demoralized condition. It will be more difficult to reorganize the company and restore discipline among the laborers than it was to build the company.

“Who will undertake the task? I will not. I am sick of the cruel suffering which the company has caused. I admit my responsibility for it. I do not attempt to excuse myself, except to say that it was the blind pursuit of empty ambition.

“Of what avail is it to me that I have greater quantities of food than I can eat; of clothing than I can wear; of servants than I need; of houses than I can live in?

“How am I benefited in keeping millions of people in a condition of cruel suffering and want?

“Is a man any better off, can he be happier because he knows that millions of his fellow-citizens are breathing curses on his name, because of the wrongs he is heaping on them and theirs?

“Gentlemen, I am weary of it—wearied of haggard faces and reproachful eyes.

“Gentlemen, I am no sentimentalist, I am a practical man and I have weighed this matter carefully. It is almost an impossibility to make a voluntary surrender of power; but, voluntary or otherwise, I believe the power of the company is ended.

“I will remain your chief long enough to wind up the affairs of the company, or I will resign and let some other person take my place. But I want you distinctly to understand that I shall render no further assistance to the company in its oppression of mankind.”

The president's remarks were followed by absolute silence.

It would be hard to describe the emotions of the directors present.

At first they were astonished, then as the significance of his words fastened themselves upon their minds, a great dread came over them—a dread that their power was gone; but this was almost immediately followed by a revulsion of feeling and to many of them it was a feeling of elation because their common sense told them that the president's forebodings were the ridiculous vaporings of a decaying intellect. Most of them aspired to fill his place.

After a brief pause the president said:

“I now tender my resignation as president of the United Supply Company. What is the board pleased to do with it?”

There was not a man in that assemblage who did not believe that he personally would be benefited by a change in the administration of the company's affairs. Every one was a candidate himself or had a candidate whose accession to office would forward his fortunes.

Then followed a line of lying and hypocritical speeches in which regrets were spoken at the president's action, and hopes expressed that he would withdraw his resignation. But these hopes were not expressed earnestly, and he was not urged with any degree of warmth to recede from his position.

So eager were these men for a chance of filling his office that within five minutes of the tendering of his resignation the right to withdraw it would have been denied him.

Some one moved that the resignation be accepted at the next meeting.

The secretary put the question and the motion was carried with a fierce chorus of "Ayes," followed by a few "Noes."

"Is there any further business before the board?" said the president. "If not a motion to adjourn will be in order."

"I move we adjourn," came from a dozen members.

The motion was put and carried without a dissenting voice.

In a moment the members were on their feet and hurrying out of the building and away in all directions to form combinations for the succession to the presidency. Not a man amongst them felt it incumbent upon him to say good-by to their chief.

The president stood alone on the platform until the last director had disappeared then turning on his heel he muttered: "A pack of wolves."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DOOMED COMMITTEE.

No time was lost by the directory in arranging for the acceptance of the resignation of President Stilpool. Within two days after tendering his resignation, a caucus was held at which it was agreed to petition the president to call a special meeting to act upon it. One week from that day was the date fixed.

The meeting was held at Stilpool's house. Every director who could rise from his bed, was present. The president's resignation was accepted with an eagerness which was almost fierce.

A day was set for the election.

Thus opened a campaign which for ferocity has never been equalled.

Every sort of promise was made for votes. One of the chief elements used as bribes was the filling of the vacancies caused by the numerous deaths among the directors. The deaths amounted to fully one-half of the whole board.

All kinds of combinations were formed and broken each day. In the struggle violence was resorted to and at the election many directors were

missing who were kidnapped and detained until too late to vote.

Every silly, lisping fop in the board believed he could fill the place of Warren Stilpool.

The election resulted in the elevation of Thomas Simpson to the presidency. This result was a surprise. But he represented well the selfish, scheming majority of the directors, and it was meet that he should get the office.

He was applauded to the echo when he announced that his administration of the office would "not be a namby pamby administration."

He said he hoped by administering the affairs of the company with a firm hand to make the dividends larger. He said he proposed to reorganize the laborers and the industries and in furtherance of this scheme he ordered certain of the directors whom he regarded as his enemies, among whom was Mr. Stilpool, back to the city to see that his reorganization schemes were enforced.

This was regarded a master stroke, for it was the general belief that those who went into the city would never return alive and thus he would make practical use of his enemies and rid himself of them at the same time.

These directors demurred; but a threat of being unseated by the board for insubordination, caused them to obey.

It was a choice of degradation to the position of

laborer without hope, which was worse than death, or probable death in the city by the disease.

Mr. Stilpool was astonished and mortified when he heard his name called in the list of those who were practically condemned to death.

He protested vehemently and as he spoke he looked around on those members whose fortunes he had advanced from time to time, expecting them to join him in his protest or at least sympathize with him, but the bold heart of this able man sank within him as he saw them with one accord avert their faces.

Then he felt in its full bitterness the chagrin of having relied on a selfish board of time-servers.

He paused in his speech for a moment as he looked around with a bitter smile which scarce any one saw, but all felt. Then he continued:

“I see, Mr. President, many men around me whom in the days of my power I have aided and befriended—men whom I have carried through crises at the risk of my office and my fortune. Some of them owe their all to me. I have earned their friendship and I supposed I was entitled to their best services and any and all sacrifices they were capable of making.

“These men, knowing that I can be of no further service to them, believe it to be my duty to go into the disease-infected city”—here he paused, then added—“and die in the harness.”

There was a murmur and a motion of protest on the part of those surrounding the speaker. He paid no heed to it except to raise his voice as he said:

“Mr. President, I shall obey the command of this board.

“I shall go into the city and I shall do my whole duty.”

As the ex-president finished speaking, he turned to walk out of the board room.

Directors arose on all sides and flocked around him, protesting their sympathy. He bent his eyes on the ground and ignoring their extended hands put his hands behind him and forced his way to the door.

There were fifty members in what was known as the City Committee. They numbered amongst them the ablest men in the board. They were the men whom the president feared. They were the men most likely to supplant him. He chuckled to himself as he thought of the diplomatic way in which he had disposed of them.

Mr. Hiton and Mr. Reed were of the number.

The committee were given one week in which to make their preparations for leaving, but in two days they had perfected all their arrangements and started for the city.

“There is great danger in the city,” said Mr. Hiton; “but there is greater danger here.”

Stilpool spoke truly when he said he was weary of the company's method of repression which caused so much cruelty and suffering.

His own sickness and suffering had changed his whole nature.

While he would not admit that he was a philanthropist, he devised a plan for the amelioration of suffering humanity which was at the same time novel and practical, and he carried it out in a spirit of cynicism which was highly enjoyable to his intellectual nature.

One of the most pleasing features of his scheme was the element of revenge with which it was charged.

Before going into the city the committee quartered themselves in one of Mr. Stilpool's palaces, located within an half an hour's ride of the company's depot.

Stilpool gave them a sumptuous dinner. It was a strange and gloomy feast. Little was said, but the diners were all thinking.

They felt like convicts who had been sent into exile. They knew it was only a matter of a short time before they would be ousted from their seats in the board. This meant virtual confiscation of their property.

If they escaped death from the disease which did not seem likely, and neglected to perform any of the duties imposed on them, deposition and confiscation of their property would follow.

Think and study as they would, they could see no escape from being degraded to the condition of laborers. In fact some of their less diplomatic enemies had said that such was to be their fate.

These fifty men did not enjoy their dinner. They were the men who had fought most bitterly against the election of Simpson and well they knew that they need expect no mercy from the president or his time-serving friends.

These fifty men were desperate. One of them brooded over his condition until he became mad and then he blew his brains out.

Dish after dish and course after course went by scarcely tasted.

Hardly a word was spoken, hardly a look exchanged.

From time to time these men would glance covertly at one another and when detected give a guilty start and drop their eyes.

When any one spoke above a whisper, the silence became painful; all listened eagerly and in the strain of dead silence the speaker would stammer and his words would die on his lips.

It was a singular group of selfish men, each one afraid to trust his neighbor.

The wine they drank—they drank sparingly—did not affect them.

All down the long table sat these gentlemen, elegantly attired in their evening dress, with never a

smile and never a jest, with scarce a word, each man trying to avoid his neighbor's eye.

They pretended to eat and they pretended to drink.

The silence was growing intolerable.

Suddenly the oppressive stillness was broken by a crash.

A number of the guests jumped to their feet and all turned fiercely towards the sound.

It was only a bottle which a trembling waiter had broken.

Mr. Hiton looked wildly around for a moment, then he seized a decanter and hurled it among the glassware on the side-board; in the dead silence the crash was terrific.

The guests almost to a man sprang to their feet and turned indignant inquiring looks at Hiton.

"I can't stand it, gentlemen," he shouted excitedly; "we must have some noise." Then he filled his glass.

"Let us drink to ourselves," he shouted. "Here's to the doomed."

There was silence for a second, then the guests shouted:

"Yes, yes."

"Doomed, doomed!"

"Yes."

"Here we are."

"Doomed!"

“Hoorah for Hiton !”

And they filled their glasses over and over again as they drank and cheered and shouted and laughed and some even cried. They acted like wild men.

They embraced one another. They walked up and down the room. They jumped upon the tables and made speeches; they smashed the dishes; they destroyed the furniture and wound up by upsetting the table.

“Let me be a boy once more,” shouted Stilpool, and he at once became one of the wildest of the revellers.

He rushed hither and thither smashing glass and breaking furniture, shaking hands with this one, jostling that one and even dancing. He drank great quantities of wine and the others followed his example.

The whole party joined hands and danced around the ruins of the feast.

It was a perfect revel. They kept it up until they were exhausted.

When these men met in the morning their manners towards each other had changed. They were friends, they were a unit bound together by an impending danger.

When Mr. Stilpool said he would do his duty he did not add “by the company.” He uttered a diplomatic nothing.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW THE GRIP OF THE COMPANY WAS LOOSENED.

WHEN the committee entered the city they found that the plague was stayed.

A week of severe rain followed by a week of cold weather had washed away and blown away all traces of the epidemic.

The laborers were worn out with fighting the disease. Many of the officers and overseers who were left in charge of the company's affairs were dead and this department was demoralized.

The officers had made some show of protecting the property of the company, but only in a half-hearted way.

Great damage had been done to the machinery and workshops. This was more the result of accident than design or intention.

A considerable quantity of the company's stores had been consumed and a greater quantity had been destroyed by neglect.

The company's affairs were conducted under a number of rigid rules and it was next to impossible to have those rules modified or changed. Consequently all kinds of supplies for consumption and manufacture kept pouring into the city from the

surrounding country as well as from distant points, notwithstanding the epidemic; and when not only the laborers but the heads of departments and overseers were prostrated by the disease, the work of storing and caring for the supplies was neglected in a most ruinous manner.

The deaths among the guard and the superintendents, managers and overseers had been so great that the factories of the company were practically at a stand-still and the committee concluded that an entire reorganization of the industrial interests was necessary.

After three days of investigation the committee met for the purpose of exchanging opinions. The members reported what they had seen and suggested divers methods of reconstructing the industrial branch of the company's interests.

"It will be a big undertaking," said Colonel Reed; "and the sooner we get to work the better."

Mr. Stilpool had not taken part in the discussion and from time to time the members glanced at him as if expecting some word expressive of approval or disapproval of the measures suggested.

At length one of the members said: "What is your opinion, Mr. Stilpool?"

"Well," answered Mr. Stilpool, "I will say this. If there is anything beautiful in this humdrum life of ours it is self-abnegation and self-sacrifice—to the beneficiary.

“We have this beautifully illustrated in the bee who labors industriously to gather and make honey which he does not enjoy.

“We see mutinous sailors taking home their ship, when they know their landing means imprisonment or death. We see men building prisons which they know will confine themselves when finished——” He paused and looked around, then added in a whisper:

“When we finish rebuilding the shattered industries of the company, the company will reward us by making us laborers.”

The committee almost to a man started to their feet.

Not a word was spoken for several seconds; then one of the members said in a strained voice:

“Do you believe that?”

Stilpool looked wonderingly at him for a second, then said calmly:

“Do you doubt it?”

“No, no, no, no!” came from all parts of the room.

“No, no, no, no!” from voices which were almost savage in their intensity.

Then they besieged Stilpool with questions as to how they could save themselves from a fate, to them, worse than death. Mr. Stilpool answered:

“First by taking the laborers out of the city and putting them all over the country in settlements of from three thousand to eight thousand.”

“Why?” asked one of the members.

“For two reasons; one of those reasons is good enough for the company and the other will do for us. The company’s reason is that it is dangerous to have so many people massed together. It imperils the safety of the organization and is a menace to health. Our reason is that it will weaken the company.”

“What about the factories and machinery?” asked Reed.

“We will ship them to the settlements. The factories will be so constructed that no more than twenty operators can work in any one of them. We will give the company the reason that it will result in better work—which is true. Our reason is that it will place the laborer in a better position than he has ever held before and in a short time give him strength to defy the company.”

“What!” cried several of the members. “What is that?”

“That will ruin the company,” said one of the committee.

“That is what we are going to do, gentlemen,” replied Stilpool.

This was followed by an uproar.

“No, we are not,” cried one of the committee indignantly.

“This is treachery,” shouted another in a menacing tone.

"A trust has been committed to our care," said another, while his eyes fairly blazed with indignation, "and it is our duty to carry it through like honorable men."

The speaker glanced wrathfully at Stilpool while his remarks were followed by cries of "Right," "Proper," "That's so."

"Yes," said another, "if there is anything I hate it is a cowardly betrayal of confidence. If we are not men enough to carry out the company's instructions to the letter, then, in the name of all that is decent, let us return like men and say so."

This was followed by shouts of approval; encouraged, the speaker added:

"Don't let it be said that we are ungrateful for the favors and honors conferred upon us by the company. Let us show that some of us at least are worthy of confidence."

Again there was a wild demonstration of approval and the committee which had become more and more excited acted as if they would do personal violence to Mr. Stilpool.

Some of them even approached him in a menacing manner.

Throughout the uproar he sat silent. At first he smiled a cynical smile, then his face flushed and again it became pale; and as he saw the menacing committeemen approach, he rose to his feet, in a rage.

"Take your seats," he commanded; and the committeemen sank cowering in their seats, falling back as far from his chair as they could.

"By what right do you censure me, accuse me of treachery, of ingratitude, of cowardice? Who is the man that talks of the honors and favors of the company? Why did he beg to be relieved of them? Who is the man who will dare go back to the new administration which is hiding from the dangers they sent him to meet, and say he desires to be relieved of his trust?"

"Gentlemen, when you can look at things as they are and are ready to talk sense send for me. Good day."

With that he walked out of the room, leaving the committee in a helpless state of amazement.

It did not take them long to recover and then they saw that the plan suggested by Mr. Stilpool was the only one by which they could escape being placed among the laborers.

It was doubtful if they could escape such a fate even by that means.

To carry out such a plan would require a firm, strong hand and they, every man of them, knew what Mr. Stilpool was.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Hiton after the assemblage had somewhat recovered from its surprise, "I never heard so much rot talked in a given space of time before, and I am ashamed to say that I did not

know it was rot until the old gentleman (Mr. Stilpool was generally spoken of as the old gentleman by both old and young) punctured it. When I think of it, by St. Gregory, I am mad enough to kick myself. Treachery, trust, honor to that skulking crowd of time-servers up there in the country. It makes me sick to think of it. What will we do?"

"Do?" said one of the committee. "Do? We have been talking a great deal of what is honorable and right. Let us now do what is manly and go to the old gentleman and apologize for our bad manners.

"The company is in the hands of a set of weak-headed schemers who will experiment it to death and one of the first experiments will be to deprive us of our rights and maybe ship us south, east or west as common laborers.

"There is no time to be lost. Our condition is desperate. It is the choice of two evils and certainly the old gentleman offers us the one which is the least offensive."

"That's true," shouted a number.

"Let us see the old gentleman," said some one and they started off.

They were not particularly dignified in their method of seeking an audience with Mr. Stilpool, but they were excited and they wanted to act at once.

They found him in one of the committee rooms and as they trooped in they grouped at one end.

The ex-president was writing at a table. He looked up, surprised.

There was an awkward pause for a moment, then Mr. Hiton stepped forward and said:

“Mr. Stilpool, we wish to apologize for our discourteous treatment of you.”

“I beg pardon, Mr. Hiton,” interrupted Mr. Stilpool, “I do not care to waste time listening to apologies; I said that when these gentlemen were ready to talk sense, I will be willing to associate with them. If any gentleman has anything to propose or desires to discuss the plan which I suggested, I am at their service. But if they come here to consume time in flinging out wild charges in wild and ungentlemanly language, then I beg to be excused.”

The committee hastened to assure Mr. Stilpool that such was not their desire and the ex-president's plan was adopted as he presented it.

As the discussion closed, one of the members said:

“When will we ask the company's permission to make this great change?”

“After we have made the change,” said Mr. Stilpool dryly. “It will save it a great deal of trouble—and,” he added, meaningly, “it may save us some.”

The work was begun at once and pushed with great vigor. Inside of a few weeks nearly two hundred new villages were laid out in different parts of the country comparatively adjacent to the great city.

The laborers entered into the enterprise with

spirit, for they felt that the change would be beneficial. They were assisted by the laborers who had been sent out of the city by the directory.

They were supplied with tents pending the building of houses and food was plentiful.

These villages were from two to five miles apart and three or four different branches of industry were established in each village; not more than twenty-five operators were allowed to work in each shop or factory.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED SUPPLY COMPANY
REVOKED.

IN the mean time the committee had sent daily dispatches to the company's headquarters. These dispatches had the effect of discouraging the return of the board to its city offices.

The board was having a merry time at its suburban headquarters.

The unlucky fifty were a constant source of amusement to the directors who got off all sorts of jokes at their expense as they thought of them toiling in the hot city for the benefit of the company, especially as it was well understood that they were to be ousted from their seats in the directory as soon as their labors were finished. And singular as it may seem, the unlucky fifty had their jokes at the expense of the other directors.

Mr. Stilpool then drafted a bill or law which read as follows:

AN ACT

To limit the amount of capital which shall be used in the conduct of commercial, manufacturing, farming and other industries by individuals, co-partnerships, corporations and syndicates, and to secure a more equitable distribution of

products, and to protect the working and middle classes from the oppressive use of large capitals.

BE IT ENACTED

SECTION ONE.—No individual, co-partnership, corporation, syndicate or combination of individuals shall use more money or capital in the conduct of business than the amount designated by the commissioners herein provided for.

SECTION TWO.—The use of money or capital in excess of the amounts designated by said commissioners is a misdemeanor. Any person violating or causing the violation of the provisions of this Act shall be punished by a fine and imprisonment, and such excess of money or capital shall be forfeited.

SECTION THREE.—At the general election there shall be chosen three commissioners for each department, whose duty it shall be to ascertain the minimum amount of money or capital required to conduct each class of business or industry in the several departments, and to fix the several amounts of capital to be so used at the lowest amount which may be used to conduct each stated industry or business, having in view the object of distributing the various industries and businesses amongst the greatest number of people over the greatest area of territory.

This act applies to all corporations, firms and individuals, except to the United Supply Company.

“This law,” said Mr. Stilpool, “does not in any way interfere with vested interests or vested rights. It does not take a dollar or a dollar’s worth of property from any man. It simply prevents men or combinations of men from so using their money or property as to injure or ruin men who have small capitals. It will effectually protect the poor from the rich.”

Mr. Stilpool then sent Mr. Hiton and Col. Reed to the company’s headquarters with a copy of the law.

The president’s reception of these gentlemen told

them plainly that he longed for the time when he would see them toiling in the laborers' quarter.

Hiton and Reed told a fearful story of their struggle with the epidemic and its results. They did not scruple about exaggerating. They had insisted on being quarantined and fumigated before they approached the headquarters of the directory.

After telling their story, part truth and part fancy, they said that there was a possibility of a rival organization springing up which would be carried on by foreign capitalists.

The president and his immediate friends who formed the governing committee of the company laughed at the suggestion of competition and the delegates from the city allowed them to think over the matter.

Said Mr. Hiton to his colleague: "They will want to know more about the foreign capitalists soon."

In spite of their laughter the president and his friends were startled by the suggestion of competition.

The president lost no time in calling the governing committee together that they might ask one and another whether there was anything in the suggestion of competition.

They believed they had the machinery of their own company well in hand, although the heavy losses had somewhat impaired its resources.

They knew that if there was to be any attempt at

creating another company no better opportunity could be offered than was now presented. They knew that ready cash would do a great deal for a new organization with the legislative body of the country.

As is the case with weak men who get control of great enterprises, they were easily alarmed and were ready to turn anywhere for aid, but they did not dare to ask aid of Mr. Stilpool.

Such a course would proclaim their weakness. In a moment of inspiration it occurred to one of the coterie that Hiton was rather intimate with Stilpool and he might suggest some way of meeting the difficulty. "And in this way," said this wise man, "we will get the benefit of Stilpool's wisdom and experience without giving him credit."

With that end in view, the president sent for Mr. Hiton and in a remarkably diplomatic way "pumped him dry," as his friends expressed it.

It was a most singular fact that Mr. Hiton gave all the information he had—or made up to fit the occasion—with the air of a very innocent man who did not for a moment suspect that the astute gentleman who was questioning him was "using him" and "pumping him dry."

Some of these gentlemen afterwards remarked with a chuckle that they did not think "Hiton could be worked so easily."

As a result of the interview Mr. Stilpool's "Lim-

ited Capital Law," was passed at once and became a law through an act of the legislative body of the country, at the request of the directory.

Mr. Stilpool smiled grimly when he received a copy of the law.

"Now," he said, "we will soon dissolve the company."

Never did the people work with greater enthusiasm than did the laborers in building their villages. The houses and factories went up like magic, and no wonder, for it was an entire and beneficent change of living.

They had shorter hours of labor. They worked in a pure atmosphere. They had good food and they were building themselves comfortable homes. There were no rows of houses. Each house was at least 50 feet from its neighbor and 20 feet back from the street.

Under the influence of the change they did better work than before and in a remarkably short space of time the products of the mills and shops began to flow into the city in a continuous stream.

Soon the industries of the company were in almost as prosperous a condition as before the epidemic.

The governing committee of the company were stunned when they returned to the city at the changes which had been made.

They were alarmed as well, and, although the president demanded in an arrogant manner to know

why these changes were made without notice to the company, he did not dare question the expediency of the move after he was informed that it was done in the interest of the company and saw how the industries were flourishing.

Under the new method of living and working, the laborers rapidly developed a spirit of independence and at the first election they returned a majority of the legislature who were pledged to restore to the laborers their rights.

One of the first measures introduced was a law revoking the charter of the company.

This might have been beaten were it not for the fact that a great portion of the board of directory were dissatisfied with the new management of the company; there were almost daily quarrels in the board, and more attention was paid to inside bickering than to outside interests.

These quarrels were encouraged by Stilpool and the "doomed committee" as they were called.

In the midst of the internal quarrels of the company Mr. Stilpool went to the seat of the government and by the most strenuous efforts got the charter of the Great United Supply Company revoked.

Then he argued with the executive officer all day long and by sheer force of will power and persistence compelled him to sign the bill revoking the charter.

He saw the bill duly signed and filed, and bidding

the executive officer a cordial good-evening left the executive chamber.

As he passed out he saw the representatives of the company in the anteroom waiting to be heard in opposition to the bill.

He smiled as, bowing courteously to them, he said:

“Now it is your turn, gentlemen.”

But the executive officer had directed his secretary to say that he would see no other deputations that evening.

The representatives of the company were not displeased at being relieved of a disagreeable task for that evening, at least, and while they were sending a dispatch to the effect that the matter had gone over for the day, Mr. Stilpool was telegraphing the news all over the country that the charter of the company was revoked.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A HAPPY PEOPLE.

THE effect of the revocation of the charter of the Great United Supply Company upon the people was wonderful.

It seemed as if they would go crazy; every method of expressing joy was resorted to over and over again.

Meetings were held, bonfires lighted, fireworks displayed and processions were moving all the time.

It was more than a week before the people thought of settling down to the every-day affairs of life and then they broke out again and had celebration after celebration.

Some mischief was done and fears were expressed that the celebrations would end in disorder if not in anarchy.

Then the wisdom of dividing the laborers up into small settlements and villages became apparent.

The vicious and boisterous in these little communities were so few in numbers that every attempt at disturbance and outrage was checked almost instantly.

Even if there had been no formal government, the

well-meaning people so far outnumbered the wrongdoers or mischievous that any attempt at disorder would have been instantly checked.

There need be no fear of prolonged riots or anarchy or popular disturbance except where all classes are herded together in the demoralizing poverty which is indigenous to great cities.

Great cities are more demoralizing to morals and society than all other causes combined.

A most determined attempt was made by the company to have the action of legislature reconsidered and the company's charter restored.

A large number of the directors went to the seat of government ready to purchase the votes of the legislators at any price, and they might have succeeded were it not for the fact that the laborers, hearing of the action of the company, came down upon the capital in swarms. They surrounded the capitol and acted in such a menacing manner that the motion of reconsideration was lost. In fact the legislators were given to understand in no unmeaning terms that if they voted in the company's interests they would never reach their homes alive.

The effects of the company were sold, in most instances on time to the laborers.

The railroads were split up into small companies and every branch of business was carried on with as small a capital as possible.

In a very short time things were running smoothly.

Every community had its small shoe factory, its little woollen mill, its cotton mill, and its flour or grist mill; its dozen or half a dozen stores, its gardens and small farms.

This was a very wasteful way of manufacture according to political economists, for it took one-third more operatives to do the work; but, on the other hand, the operatives worked shorter hours in better workshops and got better pay. There were a thousand times as many employers as there had ever before been in the country.

Everything cost more. Necessaries of life were not cheap, but everybody could have employment and everybody had the wherewithal to purchase what he needed.

It matters not how dear necessities of life may be if one has the money to purchase them; on the other hand, it matters not how cheap they may be if one has not the money to purchase.

When the prices of necessities go below the cost of production it proclaims two undesirable conditions: first, that some one or class has made a loss in the production; second, that there is an inability among the masses to purchase from lack of money.

The peace which comes of content spread over the land in a way which it had never known before.

The new order of things brought the people short hours of labor, plenty of needed rest, and time for self-improvement.

In the matter of income there was but small difference between master and man, and their ways of living were similar.

The bitter experience of the past taught the people that extremes in methods of living lead to oppression and cruelty; consequently all attempts at extravagance and ostentatious show was discountenanced.

A man was not what his money gave him the appearance of being, but what he actually was—skilled as a mechanic, an operative, a salesman, a doctor, an artist or an author.

There was one great boon which the company had conferred on the people. It had eliminated the drinking habit.

The horrors of intemperance had disappeared from among the people. The company early in its career, by law or rule, absolutely cut off the supply of liquor.

The enforcement of this law at once increased the efficiency of the workers and prevented drunken outbreaks and brawls.

This habit of temperance the people maintained in their new condition.

Another good result of the company's domination was the common level upon which it had placed the people.

This engendered a spirit of tolerance, forbearance, and sympathy among the people.

The adaptability of humanity to circumstances was exemplified in a marvellous degree.

The wild extravagance of the directory and the grinding poverty of the common people or laborers, had given place to a happy mean which was exhilarating, and although the ex-members of the directory grumbled and complained for a time, they were so few in number that their complaints went unheeded.

The people, lifted as they were to a condition of comfort which, compared with their former condition, was most happy, entered upon the new life with enthusiasm, and in a spirit of friendly rivalry, each man and each family trying to outdo the other in efforts to get as much as possible out of life.

As soon as they had been settled in their new condition they began to beautify their homes and villages, and this was done in a way which entailed the least outlay of money. This spirit speedily developed into a craze with the result of elevating the taste of the citizens to the highest point which the world had ever known.

This spirit of rivalry extended from village to village and gave the inhabitants employment of the pleasantest kind for their leisure.

The great desideratum was to make all improvements with the smallest outlay of money, and the results in many instances were wonderful.

At the outset of the change, men shook their

heads and predicted that the lazy, shiftless, and the vicious could not be made to conform to the new and kindly condition without the incentive of dire want; but experience taught them that an ounce of practical experience was worth many pounds of theory.

Relieved of the eternal fear of starvation or the poor-house and the awful struggle for bread, the people found comfort in living, and faithfully performed their share of labor because it was the custom and fashion.

In a beautiful valley to the west of the great city and fifty miles away, the village of Stilpool was planted.

It was named in compliment to Mr. Stilpool who had taken up his residence there. He had a little money and he started a woollen cloth mill.

Col. Reed had a cotton mill and Leon started a factory for finishing cloth.

Leon found it difficult to manage his business at first, but the workmen did all they could to aid instead of hinder the conduct of the business.

There was a spirit of chivalry and loyalty among the men which made the management almost a pastime, instead of a labor.

Those of the men who were disposed to be lazy or inclined to hinder the work, soon found that such a spirit would not be tolerated.

The work was not hard and there was no strain

on either the workmen, the superintendents, or the proprietors.

As a social factor Millicent, Maud Holt (now Mrs. Dr. Clark), and Grace Kirby with a number of other ladies residing in Stilpool organized a society where they taught children sewing.

This was very successful and afforded a pleasant pastime to the ladies.

They made many garments in the course of a few meetings.

"What will we do with these things?" asked one of the ladies.

"Why, give them to some of the poor people," suggested Maud.

"That is a good plan," said Millicent.

"But where are the poor?" asked one of the ladies.

The ladies looked at one another inquiringly.

"Do you know of any?" asked Millicent of one of the ladies.

"No," said the lady.

"Do you?" she asked of another.

"No," said the lady addressed; "there are some who are poor, but their friends are able to take care of them."

A committee was appointed to canvass the village and they returned with the report that there was not one person in the village who would accept charity.

One of the ladies looked in an amazed and helpless way at the pile of clothing as she said to Grace Kirby:

“What can we do with them? Isn’t it too bad that there are no poor to give them to?”

“No, it isn’t,” said Grace. “I am glad of it even if we have to throw them away. I hope I shall never see a beggar again.”

And so the industrial feature, the ladies’ society as an aid to the poor, was a failure.

In each village one or two afternoons in each week were devoted to out-door exercises which were participated in by both sexes.

Almost every evening there was an entertainment of some kind.

CHAPTER XLVII.

LEON ASKS A QUESTION.

IN the twilight, with their forms reflected in a quiet nook of the river, Leon and Millicent slowly walked through a glade of the grove which bordered the outskirts of Stilpool.

It was one of those restful days which visit us in the autumn.

As they walked, Millicent had her hand on Leon's shoulder.

Sometimes they would stop and look down into the river at their reflected images.

"We look as if we were one person with two heads," said Leon with a smile.

Blushing and laughing Millicent moved away as she said:

"Now, we don't."

Drawing her to him Leon said: "Now we are one again. Why can't we continue so forever?"

Millicent hung her head and said nothing.

"Look up, little girl," said Leon, tipping her under the chin. "How long have we been engaged?"

"Oh, ever so long."

"Then, why not get married? I have worked

hard and all our troubles are passed. We have no anxieties and you cannot now say that I would be neglecting any public duty."

Here he smiled as he tilted Millicent's head back and added: "In assuming the care of this little girl, would I?"

"Are you sure you would not?" she said.

"Yes, very sure."

A troubled, puzzled look came over her face as she said:

"Leon, we are very happy now; do you think we could be as happy if we made a change?"

"I will risk it," said Leon, eagerly.

"Well, dear, as you please," she said in a whisper.

It had grown quite dark—so dark that the two figures seemed to have blended into one another. There were some sounds which seemed like half smothered protests, but when a few minutes after this couple emerged from the darkness of the grove into the comparative light of the open path, they seemed as happy as need be.

Unannounced and without warning General Sinclair had returned to his native country, and when Millicent returned from her walk all aglow with happiness, her father was awaiting her in the parlor.

General Sinclair had aged terribly during his absence and his arrogant, commanding air had given place to one of dependence and pleading.

Millicent was shocked at the change. If any of the resentment she had felt towards him for his harsh treatment of her remained, it was instantly effaced by a most tender sympathy when her father held out his arms to her with the pleading look of a man who fears he may be repulsed.

One glance and Millicent threw herself into his arms.

"My poor father," she said; and all past was forgotten.

Had he returned as he had left, stern and arrogant, she would have met him coldly or even defiantly; but now, as she looked into his eyes, now pleading instead of demanding, she felt almost conscience-stricken or at least in a manner responsible for the change.

"I have come," he said, "to ask my child to take care of me. Will you, Millie?"

"Yes, father, I will."

The general had invested his money abroad so advantageously that he had a fair income. He made arrangements to build an elaborate house, the only elaborate one in the village, but he changed his plans when informed that simplicity was the fashion of the day and that it would make him conspicuously unpopular to make a much greater showing than his neighbors.

When he learned that Leon and Millicent were speedily to be married, he manifested so much dis-

tress that even Leon consented to postpone the marriage indefinitely.

If General Sinclair had met the proposed marriage in a spirit of antagonism, Leon and Millicent would have rebelled, but he merely made a weak, unreasoning, childish opposition which was as tenacious as it was weak, and they were obliged to defer to his wishes lest some dire result might follow opposition to his desires.

It was a sad disappointment to the lovers, and they strove in many ways to overcome his opposition, but this unreasoning hostility to the union of Leon and Millicent seemed to be the last fragment of his once strong will.

But Leon had no time to fret and pine over his ill fortune in this regard. There was something in the air which alarmed him, and alarmed all of the friends of the Limited Capital Law.

There was an effort being made to repeal the law.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WITHOUT SUFFERING AND DISTRESS LIFE IS
INSIPID.

"THIS is a pretty way for the people of a village to waste their leisure time," said an ex-director to Mr. Stilpool.

"Do you think so?" asked Mr. Stilpool. "How would you have them spend their leisure time?"

"At something serious and manly; something of practical value and importance."

"Do you know of anything of more practical value and importance than for a people to be as happy as they can be by the indulgence in healthy amusements?"

"But," said the man, "they ought to work more."

"There is no need for more work, for they will never want for the necessities of life. They cannot become what was called rich, and why not be happy? (Everybody used to try to get rich, but few succeeded.) The serious affairs of life receive all the attention they require. What would you have the people do?"

"Do? Why erect great buildings, great bridges, aqueducts and other creations which would be monuments to their industry."

The creation of those great monuments of which you speak is a relic of the past. The greatest of them have been erected by semi-civilized people in semi-civilized times. They are not proofs of enlightenment. In fact, every great structure or creation, while it may speak of the skill of one great architect or engineer, also tells of the suffering of thousands, the robbery of thousands and it also tells a sickening story of trickery, fraud, and corruption.

“There never has been erected a great structure which has not cost more in money, worry, and the demoralization incident to the debauching and corruption of public officials than the creation was worth to the people.”

“I think,” said the ex-director, “that you exaggerate.”

“On the contrary, I believe I could not exaggerate, and if you will think of the great undertakings which you have known of or heard of, you must bear out my statement.”

“Then you mean to say that it is good for the people to spend their time doing as little work as possible and their leisure in pastimes rather than in looking after the graver things of life?”

“My friend,” answered Stilpool, “there are few things in life which are entitled to grave consideration now, and the fewer the better. All that man needs is food, clothing and shelter, and after he has these elements he wants recreation. He does not

want gravity. The gravest fish is an oyster, the gravest bird is an owl, the gravest animal is an ass, the gravest man is a fool.

“When I see a lot of men pottering gravely over what is really not serious, it reminds me of a consultation of apes chattering over a cocoanut.

“The only real serious thing in life heretofore has been the attempt of men to accumulate abnormal amounts of property. Out of that grew the two other serious efforts of life: the attempt, successful and unsuccessful, lawfully and unlawfully, of men to get their neighbors' property (oftentimes the lawful methods were as iniquitous as the unlawful).

“The other serious thing in life was man's efforts to keep his property in spite of the never-ceasing efforts of people (lawfully and unlawfully) to get it away from him.

“These two efforts or motives in myriads of forms kept man in a feverish state of activity which was demoralizing to him mentally, physically and morally.”

“The same thing exists to-day,” replied the ex-director.

“The same thing exists to-day only in a few isolated instances. In the past it was universal and there was no help for it; every man was obliged to stand on guard over his property. The least relaxation, want of skill or sagacity meant loss. Ah, what a pitiless, cruel life it was!

“The rich man was obliged to be vigilant to keep what he had and to get more; the middle class and poor, to keep up appearances or to supply their simplest needs. To-day every man has sufficient for his needs and men in business only compete as men, not as men backed by an almost resistless force—money.

“To-day every man has an equal chance according to his ability. He knows that no man can use more capital than he in the conduct of a rival business. He knows it is a contest of ability and not of money. He is not in daily fear that some rich man or combination of rich men will so manipulate their money as to crush him or crowd him out of business and ruin him.

“It was this danger and dread more than any other which made men savagely selfish in their dealings and intercourse, not only in business but in their social relations.

“In those times the penalty of liberality and unselfishness was ruin. To-day men are relieved of the menace of the unlimited use of capital. The law has placed a check upon the use of money.

“Men need not now fear large capitals and they can afford to be liberal, unselfish, and humane in dealing with one another.

“The motive for accumulating large amounts of money no longer exists, for the means of doing it are barred by law.”

"But there are evasions of the law," said the ex-director.

"There are violations and evasions of every law," answered Mr. Stilpool, "but the evasions are petty and do not affect the general good result."

Mr. Stilpool was right in the main, but the limited capital law did not eradicate the wolfish instinct in man which is called ambition and which exhibits itself in a desire to excel and in excelling to take from his fellows, and if need be in so excelling, tear down, crush and trample on them.

This wolfishness in man has ever been the bane of the human race; for protection against it government is maintained.

There are many apologies for its existence. It is often called "laudable ambition."

Unchecked, it is the most cruel and most mischievous of all the elements which go to make up the human motive power. Unchecked and unlimited it is social anarchy. It assumes its most hideous forms in the pursuit of wealth. In that form it carries misery directly and indirectly into every household and to every individual, rich as well as poor. In that form it is the scourge of the human race and is pitiless beyond all comparison, for it wages incessant war upon the aged, the inexperienced, the weak, and the infirm. Society has placed a limit upon everything which man controls, with the exception of the use which he may make of his wealth. Why

this exception? In the pursuit and accumulation of wealth, selfishness grows strong and runs riot.

There were a good many elements which kept the people of the different villages in what might be called a mild state of excitement, but there was none of that excitement which is made up of misery, oppression, and wrong-doing.

Among the morbid spirits who craved that sort of excitement, there was a great deal of complaint of the "insipidity" of the life they were leading.

There was a certain class of people who could not live unless they heard of murders, robbery, and starvation; unless they saw disease, suffering and misery and disasters; unless there was constantly presented to their view the contrast of resplendent opulence and picturesque poverty; unless there was plenty of unhappiness around them they were unhappy; they were dissatisfied with the monotony of the life which secured to every one of the earth's creatures enough to eat, enough to wear and shelter. This life was too tame.

The horrible condition of affairs where men oppressed men with all the attendant cruelty and brutality was to them a relish which added piquancy to life, and without which life was tasteless.

These people wanted to be better than their neighbors; to wear better clothes, to eat better food, to live in better houses, and to have less fortunate people envy their prosperity.

This was a spirit which was fostered and fanned by certain of the ex-directors of the company who sought to breed dissatisfaction with what they called the "insipid times."

"Let us have times when a man can win or lose something, when a man can show some nerve in business," said one of the advocates of return to unlimited capital.

As the people began to recover from the effects of their long period of practical servitude, as good food and healthy surroundings brightened their lives with a robust health to which they had long been strangers, the wolfishness in their natures began to reassert itself.

The employers began trying to outdo each other in money-making. They strove to increase their factories and stores in size and capacity and to increase their capital. This was unnoticed for some time, but after a while its effect was felt and certain parties were detected, prosecuted, and punished.

Then commenced a bitter struggle between what were known as the "easy-goers"—men who were content with a state of society which forbade men using their wealth or accumulations to ruin their fellow-manufacturers or merchants, but allowed men the fullest scope for the exercise of their abilities as business men and only limited their use of capital—and the "rushers"—men who desired to be allowed to use everything in the way of money and property

which they had or could borrow for the purpose of increasing their own wealth and without regard to the consequences to their neighbors or the commonwealth.

These were the people who were constantly violating the limited-capital law and they were frequently detected and fined.

Several of the members of the old directory made up their minds to fight the law. Having this end in view they combined their moneys and made a bold effort to upset the law.

"Give me \$50,000," said Sidney Griffin to some of his associates, "and I can buy a repeal. It is my opinion that the people are thoroughly sick of this namby-pamby way of living."

"I am of the same opinion," said ex-director Russell.

"I believe in making an effort in this matter," said another.

"What do you propose?" asked Gus Wilmot.

"I would suggest that we make a determined stand and fight the question to the highest court," said Griffin.

"Well, let us put up a fund to fight it," said Wilmot.

A subscription was made up and a plan was adopted for making what they called a test case.

A few days after, complaint was made that John Rand had violated the law in that he used more than

\$5,000 capital which was the limit allowed for the conduct of the clothing business.

The violation was a flagrant one and there was no attempt at concealment.

The action was begun for the penalty which was forfeiture of the amount of capital in excess of the limit.

There was a great deal of indignation at the way the matter was begun.

There was in the attitude of Rand a tinge of the old-time arrogance and insolence of the directory.

"I deny the right of the state to say what a man shall do with his wealth or to limit its use," was his answer to the charge.

Rand was convicted. An appeal was taken and the judgment was affirmed.

In deciding the question, the court among other things said:

"This is not a question in which individual interests should be considered. It is one which affects the whole people; and individual hardships, if there be any, must be ignored.

"The benefit of the greatest number must be the first consideration.

"It is claimed that there are hard-working, self-denying men who are ambitious to accumulate wealth and build up fortunes to the end that in their declining years they may not be a charge on their friends or the public. That thrift is laudable and should

be encouraged by the state. That to deny a man the right to use all the capital he can get in any way he pleases is an encroachment on his liberty.

“On the other hand, it is urged that the unrestricted use of money in business has deprived ninety-nine one-hundredths of the people of the world of a fair chance of making a comfortable living.

“That the unlimited use of money in business has been the cause of great corruption in public life as well as wrongs in private life.

“Laudable ambition should always be encouraged by the courts, but an ambition which in its results ruins hundreds of thousands of citizens and diverts a great portion of the result or earnings of the labors of the whole people to the benefit of a few of what are called ambitious or thrifty men, is not laudable. Rich men are not the best citizens.

“The relative numbers benefited by the unlimited use of capital can be best understood by referring to the actual statistics which show that when men were permitted to use unlimited money in business, more than eighty-five per cent have failed, and these failures were in the main due to the oppressive use which was made of large capitals.

“This does not leave any doubt in the mind of the court as to which side of this question is beneficial to the greatest number of the citizens of the state.

“If this country recognized a favored class, one which should be granted special privileges because

of peculiar abilities or endowments, there might be some reason for the interference of the courts for the protection of such a class, even in the unrestrained use of their money by those who have large possessions; but there is no such class recognized by law. If such a class were tolerated the court cannot see why such privileges should be limited to those who have talent for money-getting.

“The artist, the physician, the architect, the farmer, the artisan, the scientist, the laborer, should all have special privileges other than those which nature affords them. Either of these classes are, from a practical point of view, more worthy of such privileges than the money-getter, and yet for success they must depend solely upon their own abilities or skill and not on accumulated force owned or borrowed.

“It is not true that man has an inherent right to use his property as he pleases, without regard to the consequences to his neighbor or the state.

“Such a right has never existed. Property of all kinds and its use are subject to inquiry and regulation by the state, and if use is made of property or money which is inimical to the interests of the people at large, or even a class, it becomes the duty of the state to regulate and restrict it.

“The limited capital law is one which in no way interferes with any reasonable ambition of men; it protects ninety per cent of the state's citizens from cruel oppression.

“It does not interfere with the liberty of the citizen, for it is applied to all alike.”

There was universal rejoicing at the announcement of this decision and the people settled down to work.

Everything which tended to show an increase of capital or of individual wealth was watched and commented upon.

From time to time merchants would try to evade the law, but detection was almost sure to follow

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE LIMITED CAPITAL LAW MUST BE REPEALED.

THE dissatisfied parties determined to have the law repealed.

They would have turned to their old-time methods of corruption, but did not for the reason that they could not raise sufficient money.

This was one of the happy results of the cutting-down of incomes.

Still the arguments used by them had more effect on the legislature than at first was considered possible. They found that there was a good deal of vitality in the suggestion that life was not worth living unless there were classes; unless there were people who were oppressed and people who were oppressing; unless there was the stimulus which comes with danger; unless some people were suffering from the cruel effect of grinding poverty; unless some must work in almost hopeless poverty, while others lived in luxury and extravagance.

The wolfish instinct of the gambler was still firmly rooted in the people and asserted itself in a restless desire of some people to better their fortunes at the expense of their fellows. The desire to lord it over

and rule their fellows was still apparent. Some men hungered for riches.

The bitter experience of the people with the company seemed to have been effaced from their memories. The proposal of Griffin and his associates for a return to the use of unlimited capital rather astonished Mr. Hiton and Leon.

Mr. Hiton called on Tom Drier who was the owner of a small iron mill.

He had heard that Drier was among those who were active in the movement for the repeal of the limited-capital law.

Mr. Drier was in his office.

"I hear, Drier, that some of you people are going to repeal the limited law—if you can."

"There isn't very much *if* about it," said Drier.

"You think not?" asked Hiton, incredulously.

"That's my opinion," said Drier, confidently.

"You might as well try to move a mountain," said Hiton.

"Well, we will move a mountain if the limited-capital law is a mountain."

"Aside from chaffing," said Hiton, "what are you fellows after?"

"Just what I said: repeal."

"Nonsense! Why?"

"Why, because we are tired of this style of living," said Drier.

"Isn't it a comfortable way of living?"

“Too comfortable; when everybody is comfortable it becomes monotonous. You want some snap in life.”

“Why, you get all the snap you want now, surely. There is something going on all the time to amuse and interest us,” said Hiton.

“Oh, there is plenty going on, but the trouble is there are no big men. We are nearly all alike. Here I am plodding along making a living and nothing more.”

“Well, you make a comfortable living, don’t you?” asked Hiton.

“Yes, and so does every workman. Why, my foreman is just as well thought of as I am, and he makes nearly as much. His family dress as well as mine and he lives in as good a house.”

“What is the objection to that?” asked Hiton.

“What objection? Why every objection. I like to see distinctions in people.”

“The only distinction in this case would be as regards money and education. Your foreman is better educated than you are and as refined in his manners and as gentlemanly in appearance. Now, what distinguishing mark would you put on him?”

“Oh, when a man runs a business, he should be a different kind of a being from his workmen and clerks.”

“How would you make him different? Would you have him shorter or longer or wiser or more foolish, or would you have him dress differently?”

"You know what I mean. The man who runs a business should have more money and live differently. I want a chance to get rich," said Drier.

"You have as good a chance as anybody. You can be as rich as anybody."

"I want a better chance than anybody, and I want to be richer than anybody. That is my idea."

"Even if you had the right to use unlimited capital in business, the chances are five thousand to one that you would not become rich. Yes, I will say that you will not have one chance in one hundred thousand of becoming rich."

"I know that," said Drier.

"When unlimited capital was allowed to be used, there was just as much chance of getting rich by gambling as in legitimate business, and ten times as many men lost their all in business as in gambling," said Hiton.

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, by simply looking at the facts as they are or were. Every business man was trying to get rich, bending all his energies to that end. How many of them left any estate when they died? What did they get out of all their worry and strife and labor? An uncertain living. How many got more? Now, they get a good living. They enjoy life, and they have no worry for their future or for the future of their families."

"But that is not enough," said Drier.

“It is more than nine hundred out of a thousand got formerly.”

“But, then, we had the snap and the incentive to win which made life interesting,” said Drier.

“I never knew a successful money-maker,” said Hiton. “Mark you, a successful money-maker who did not cry out against the eternal strife which money-getting necessitated, who did not protest against the high pressure of business which fairly burned the life out of even successful business men and brought them to untimely graves. I have heard the best of them fairly moan as they cried: ‘What is the use?’ ‘What does it all amount to?’ ‘How much happier I would be if I could only do business without this body-destroying strain!’”

“In the past the most cruel burden that business men bore was debt. While he was in business he was always in debt, and he was obliged to rely on the promise to pay of others to meet his own indebtedness.

“Now there are no debts, because the capital men have in business will not permit of giving credit. This change relieves business men of ninety per cent of the risk and uncertainty and worry which in former times wore out their lives and kept them in a feverish state of excitement and uncertainty and practically destroyed their taste for rational recreations.”

“Notwithstanding all you say,” said Drier, “that

feverishness and excitement is just what I am after. It is the only thing in life worth living for."

"You say it is the only thing in life worth living for? Will you be willing to die if you don't have it?"

"Yes," said Drier, quickly. "I would."

"Well, then I guess you will have to die," said Hiton, as he laughingly bade Drier good-by.

CHAPTER L.

THE LIMITED CAPITAL LEAGUE.

“WHAT do those lunatics want?” said Leon when Mr. Hiton told him of his interview with Drier. “They will be mobbed if they are not careful.”

“Oh, it is simply a waste of time to pay any attention to them,” said Mr. Hiton.

A bill to repeal the limited-capital law was introduced by one of the members of the legislature shortly after the above conversation and, to the surprise of the country, it received some support; in fact, much greater support than was anticipated.

“What do you think of it?” said Leon anxiously.

“Nothing at all,” answered Mr. Hiton. “You will always find men willing to support any measure, no matter how hazardous or mischievous. It is the desire which some people have to go contrary to what is popular or right.”

“Then you think there is nothing serious in the showing of the last vote?” asked Leon.

“Not at all,” replied Hiton. “The people are not fools.”

A few days after a vote was taken on a motion to

advance the bill and to the surprise of everybody it was carried.

"This is startling," said Leon to Hiton.

"It is," said Hiton, gravely. "Those fellows have more strength than I had supposed."

"What does it mean?" said Dr. Clark.

"It means," said Hiton, "that we must be up and doing."

"I am going to the capital to-morrow," said Mr. Stilpool.

"I am with you," said Leon and Hiton.

At the capital they found the "limited capitalists" demoralized and the repealers jubilant.

"What is the matter here?" said Mr. Stilpool to Andrew Craft, one of the leaders of the opposition of the repeal. "Are they all crazy?"

"They seem to be, but they are not," replied Craft. "The repealers are at their old tactics. They have organized a company with an enormous capital. It will be the first in the field and they say its affairs will be immensely profitable."

"Well, what of that?" said Leon. "It is illegal."

"They propose to legalize it."

"How?"

"Why, the same power that repeals the act can legalize the company," replied Craft.

"But what has the legislature to do with that?" said Leon. "How does that benefit the legislature?"

"I'll tell you," said Craft, leaning forward and

speaking in a whisper. "They say that the promoters are distributing great blocks of stock among the members of the house."

"What!" said Hiton, jumping to his feet. "Who says so?"

"I know it," said Craft in a convincing tone.

"But the stock is of no value," said Stilpool.

"They say it will be and the boys are anxious to have it when it is made so. Griffin asserts in the most positive terms, that they have enough votes to carry the bill and they will remember their friends—and their enemies. By threats and arguments they have won over a large number of legislators who were bitterly opposed to the bill." Then after a pause, "There, gentlemen, you have the facts as they are."

There was a dead silence, and after a secret conference Mr. Stilpool said:

"Gentlemen, we must find out who are bribing and who are being bribed."

In the mean time the country had taken alarm.

Demands for the death of the bill came pouring in from the constituencies by the tens of thousands, and counter-demands or petitions for the repeal poured in in great volume.

The press was equally divided, and time-serving legislators were in a condition of uncertainty calculated to drive them to the verge of insanity.

From the moment of the adjournment of the

house until the re-convening, members were besieged by the advocates and opponents of the bill. Many of them were scarcely allowed to sleep.

Deputations representing one or the other side of the question were constantly at the elbow of the harassed members.

The promoters of the bill were better organized and had the incentive of a direct reward, and they worked with the enthusiasm and eagerness and desperation of gamblers whose all depended upon a turn of the market. They were positive and aggressive, while those who opposed the bill were simply negative. The opposition had nothing to offer and they could only ask that things be left as they were, and point to the horrors of the Supply Company's rule.

This was ridiculed by the repealers and regarded as an old story.

"Leave things as they are," said the elder men.

"We want a change," said the younger men.

The bill was bitterly debated and all sorts of parliamentary tactics were resorted to by each side to progress or retard the passage.

"If you vote for this bill you are a ruined man."

"If you don't vote for it you are a ruined man."

"You need never return home if you vote for it."

"All the progressive men are for it, and only old women are opposed."

“It is better to be on the winning side; for those who vote against it are marked men.”

“Every instinct of our nature turns against the return to the hideously cruel system of unlimited capital.”

Such were the contradictory communications the members received.

For two weeks the warfare was kept up and the legislators were almost distracted for want of sleep. Some of them became sick and some of them lost their minds through the mental strain.

But amidst all the vacillation there was one resolute body of men who never swerved from their original position.

They kept in view what was for the best interests of the whole people, for every individual, whether he had the money-making talent or not; they believed that while he was in the world he was entitled to live comfortably, and no matter what a man's ability might be as a money-getter, he should not be allowed the privilege of keeping his fellow-creatures in a condition of wretchedness for the purpose of allowing him either to live in ostentatious extravagance or to enable him to hoard up wealth.

These men kept that single idea in view and nothing could swerve them—neither threats, ridicule, nor promise of reward. They stood solidly together when everything seemed lost, and they refused everything in the way of compromise.

But for their uncompromising stand the bill would have passed the first week.

There were times when it seemed as if the opposition was only working for obstructive purposes, and many believed that it was only a question as to the length of time it would take to pass the repeal bill.

Those who were wavering seemed inclined to go over to the repealers.

Stilpool and his associates understood thoroughly the methods used to influence legislators, and they kept well posted on the movements of the repealers.

He organized his associates in such a way that they did not interfere with each other's work and as an auxiliary he organized a society known as the Limited Capital League, with branches in every village.

Confident of success, the repealers became boastful and bold and they made promises and statements in the most reckless manner. They even let it be known to whom stock had been given as well as the amounts, and to whom promised.

In their certainty of success they became insolent and treated some of their lukewarm supporters in a very cavalier manner.

Said Griffin, addressing some of the members who were hesitating, "We don't care whether you are with us or not. We have enough votes without you. Here is the list," and he exhibited a roll of

the members with a check mark opposite most of the names.

The list was a startling one and caused the wavering to draw their breath.

“What assurance have we that we will be taken care of if we stand by you?” said Mr. Williams, the spokesman of the deputation.

“We make no promises,” said Griffin, in an insulting tone. “You can be with us if you like, and you will be better off than if you vote against us. That is all we have to say; gentlemen, good-day.” And the deputation felt themselves dismissed.

“I will be hanged if I vote for it anyway, now,” said George Collins, one of the members.

The others said nothing.

CHAPTER LI.

LIZZIE AT THE CAPITAL.

AUGUSTUS WILMOT was the leader of the repealers in the legislature. To him the repealers looked for instruction. He had everything in hand, and he felt that he was to revel in wealth once more. He felt triumphant, and he sent for Lizzie that she might be with him in the hour of his victory.

Lizzie came—the same sweet Lizzie, with the same dimples in her cheeks and chin, a little deeper perhaps. The same round cheeks, a little rounder. The same brown eyes a shade more thoughtful, and oh, such a merry, wise look coming out of them. The same brown hair with a little more of the gold shining through it. The same willowy figure, but a little less willowy. She was the same sweet little body who was carried through all the troublous times on cushions of downy softness. No care, no trouble, no worry had come to this favored child of fortune, and she came to the capital with her beaming, wistful smile which touched a sympathetic chord in every heart.

She was not dressed in as expensive apparel as in former time, but no one would say that this de-

tracted from her winsome appearance, for to her aid she had summoned a sweet womanly taste which by a few coquettish touches, as by a fairy wand, transformed coarse fabric into garments of striking beauty.

"Hello, Gus," said Lizzie as Wilmot met her at the depot. "What do you want me to bother you for, old fellow?" and she pulled his head down to hers so that their lips met.

"Why, Lizzie," Wilmot protested, "see all those people looking."

"Oh, my!" she said, looking shocked as she blushed crimson. "I don't care," she added, "they have lips and they kiss too, don't they?"

She put her bag and parcels into his hands and pushed her arm through his, as she said:

"What can you want me here for in your great business?"

"I'll tell you," he said smiling at her round eyes, "when we get home."

At his rooms in the hotel Wilmot did the kissing. He almost squeezed the breath out of the little woman. She submitted, nor did she say a word, until he sat down to recover his breath. Then she sat on his lap as she asked with a pout, "Is that all?"

"Do you want to kill a fellow?" he said.

"Wouldn't it be a pleasant way to die?" she said, smiling.

Then he told her of his position as leader of his side, advocating the repeal of the limited-capital law. He told her of the number of votes he had secured and the amounts of stock and bonds promised and given to each member on his side.

He told her who were distributing stock to the members for their votes.

“And how much does my darling get?” she said, as she toyed with his mustache.

“Wait till I show you.”

Wilmot went to a desk and took out a great pile of bonds and stock.

“See that,” he said; “that is worth \$2,000,000.”

“\$2,000,000!” said Lizzie, framing her mouth for a whistle. “Goodness, aren’t they kind to you!”

“Not a bit of it,” said Wilmot. “They wouldn’t give me a dollar if they could help it. I forced it out of them, dollar by dollar, and they almost got me in a position where they could have swindled me out of it. They are a lot of scoundrels and I would like to send them to jail, every one of them.”

“O Gus, take me driving, won’t you?” cried Lizzie, suddenly, being tired of too much business.

And they went driving; and as they were driving many of the members and men about town envied Wilmot his charming companion.

Lizzie was taking a walk the next day. Wilmot was at the legislature, when she met Leon and they took lunch together.

Lizzie was full of Wilmot's good fortune and she talked about it with enthusiasm. She told of the stock and of the men who had the distributing of it among the members and of the members to whom it was given—all this as far as she could remember.

"Isn't Wilmot smart, eh?" she said.

"Yes," said Leon, "and he deserves all he will get."

"He is awfully good too, isn't he?" said Lizzie with a smile.

"I dare say he is," said Leon dryly. "Almost too good."

Leon then saw Lizzie home.

Lizzie knew that Wilmot did not like Leon, so she said nothing about her pleasant lunch.

With his blood tumbling through his veins in a way which made every nerve tingle, Leon rushed into Stilpool's headquarters and in a few words gave the facts and names which he had learned from Lizzie.

There was a triumphant gleam in Mr. Stilpool's eye as he said:

"The repealers have had it all their way so far. Now, it is our turn."

CHAPTER LII.

PURSUED BY A MOB.

THE village of Stilpool was represented in the legislature by Leonard Hatree.

Hatree was a good politician, but weak and susceptible to influence. When elected he was unquestionably opposed to the repeal of the limited-capital law.

As the session advanced and the repealers began to show their strength, Hatree betrayed signs of wavering. He was one of those men who always wanted to be on the winning side. He was astonished by the showing the repealers made, and although he would not take a bribe, he thought it no harm to advance his interests, politically, by going over to the successful party.

General Sinclair was active among the repealers at the capital, and it was mainly through his influence that Hatree finally cast his fortunes in with the repealers.

In the whole village of Stilpool there were not twenty-five men who favored the "repeal," and when it was rumored that their representative had declared in favor of the "repeal," the report was scarce

credited. But soon the report was confirmed, coupled with the announcement that General Sinclair had purchased their representative "body and soul."

The inhabitants were indignant; they were beside themselves with shame and chagrin.

"Stilpool represented by a repealer?" cried one of the citizens. "It is an outrage."

"It is a disgrace," said another, "to have a man misrepresent us in this way."

"We should demand his resignation," said the first speaker.

A meeting of the villagers was called and Hatree's resignation was demanded by an almost unanimous vote.

Hatree was frightened by the demonstration. He drafted his resignation and was about to send a copy of it to his constituents when Sinclair stopped him.

"What a fool you are," he said. "Your vote is needed. Where will you be if you resign? Your constituents will do nothing for you, the new company will have no reason to favor you, and you will be a ruined man. Keep the stand you have taken. In two weeks the new company will be organized and it will remember its friends and its enemies. Where will your constituents be? Back in the ranks of laborers. Which side is it best to be on?"

"The repealers, I think," said Hatree, "but——"

"There are no 'buts' about it," said Sinclair. "Those fools in Stilpool will be of no use to you

after a week or two. They will be helpless. In fact, their enmity will be better than their friendship."

"But," said Hatree, "suppose that the repeal bill does not pass and the company is not organized? I will never dare to return to Stilpool."

"You talk like an infant," said Sinclair, contemptuously. "Don't you know that these things are forgotten almost immediately; that the average citizen is very short-memoried?"

"Look at the memorial they have sent. See the letters I get," said Hatree. "By every post they come, threatening me and demanding my immediate resignation. I am afraid they will come down here and kill me if I don't resign at once."

"The hotter the public indignation the sooner it burns out," replied Sinclair, with a snap of his fingers. "Even if the repeal fails, in two weeks people will be tired of talking about your perfidy" (smiling sarcastically), "and any one who refers to it will be laughed at for talking ancient history."

"The average man is like the tide, always changing. One of his strongest desires is novelty. He hates what is trite. His aversion is an oft-repeated story. He has a thirst for sensations with which to whet his appetite like a condiment. He is always craving something new and he hates an old story."

"Before you see these silly people again they will have a dozen sensations which will have made yours look very faded."

“What will I do?”

“Sit down and write to the postmaster that you have been elected to serve your village and that you intend to continue so doing in a broad, patriotic spirit, and that you cannot be swerved from your duty by a lot of impractical visionaries who don’t know when they are being well served.”

Hatree sent such a letter and, like a weakling that he was, added that Sinclair subscribed to the same views.

A few days after the letter reached Stilpool, Sinclair had the temerity to go to the village.

As Sinclair arrived at the station a meeting of the Limited Capital League was being held for the purpose of denouncing the conduct of Hatree and to again demand his resignation.

At the Limited Capital League meeting many things were said which were calculated to inflame the minds of the audience against Sinclair and it so happened that Sinclair had just passed the hall as the meeting adjourned.

He heard the noise of people talking, and turned to look towards the hall.

As he turned he was recognized by several of the crowd.

“There he goes, now,” shouted one of the men.

“There’s Sinclair,” yelled another.

“There goes the traitor,” cried another.

“See the repealer,” still another called.

Then there was a confusion of yells and cries. Sinclair heard it and again looked back.

“Let us hang him,” shouted one of the men.

“Hang him!”

“Lynch him!”

“Catch him!”

“Don’t let him get away!”

“Stop him!”

The crowd became more excited every moment.

Sinclair kept looking back over his shoulder while he at the same time increased his pace.

“Hang the repealer,” shouted a man as he started forwards.

The crowd followed with a yell.

Sinclair turned, saw them coming, and started on a run for his home.

He was remarkably fleet for an old man.

Leon had arrived from the capital earlier in the day, and he spoke at the Limited Capital League meeting, which was held in the public hall.

General Sinclair’s home was a short distance from the hall.

Leon left the hall before the meeting was over and went to Sinclair’s house to call on Millicent.

General Sinclair had not changed his mind in regard to Leon. He was still as firm in his opposition to his daughter’s becoming Leon’s wife as ever.

“My daughter,” he had said, with tears in his

eyes, "I cannot consent to your marrying a man whose character is colorless."

"But, father," pleaded Millicent, "Leon has a great deal of character."

"How has he shown it?"

"In no special way, but he is always good and kind to me."

"Any one can be kind when they are weak."

"But Leon is not weak."

"When he does something which proves that he has strength and is courageous I will be only too happy to give my consent to his marrying you; for, my child, I want to see you happy."

In this way the matter was left.

Notwithstanding Sinclair's opposition, Leon called on Millicent whenever he chose and on this occasion was telling her of his doings at the capital.

Suddenly Millicent, who was looking out of the window down the street towards the hall, started up:

"What is the matter?" she said.

"Where?" asked Leon.

"Down the street," she answered as she pointed towards the hall.

Leon looked out of the window.

A crowd of men were running towards the house. There was a man in front of the crowd some distance ahead. He was running rapidly.

The crowd seemed to be pursuing him. They were

gesticulating and some of them were brandishing sticks and weapons, while others were throwing stones at the fleeing man.

“What is it ?” said Millicent in a horrified whisper.

“I don’t know,” answered Leon.

Suddenly Millicent caught hold of Leon’s shoulder and leaned on him while she stared eagerly at the fleeing man who was momentarily coming nearer to the house.

“It’s papa, it’s papa !” she cried.

“Yes, yes, so it is,” said Leon, breathless.

“Oh! Oh! What is the matter ? what will we do ?” cried Millicent.

“Out of the way,” shouted Leon, as he pushed her one side. He rushed out of the room into the hall. There he picked up a heavy stick and at the same moment opened the front door and went out on to the stoop.

The crowd was now close to the house. The noise of their shouting and cries was horrible. There was an angry menace in their cry which almost froze Leon’s blood. The cry of an angry mob is the most terrifying and horrible of all sounds. There is nothing like it in the world. It is more terrifying than anything that can be seen or conjured up by the mind. It is like a living thing which whirls around the body and seems to saturate it with a vibrating fear. It seems to envelop the mind and crush it under a resistless weight. It seems to strike on the

heart like a knell and set every nerve tingling and strains them to a tension which is agonizing.

Sinclair was about twenty feet ahead of the mob. He was bare-headed, his face was ghastly, his eyes were glaring in terror, and there was a dash of blood on his forehead. He was breathing hard, but he was running pretty well.

A moment after Leon had opened the door he dashed up the steps.

"Run back to the stable," said Leon to him in a low tone.

Sinclair paused for a second as he reached the top of the stoop, gave a gasp, and dashed through the doorway. Millicent was there to receive him.

"Millie, lock the door," Leon shouted, as he slammed the door. He turned and faced the mob.

The mob came rushing up the steps.

Leon stood in front of the door.

"Where is he?" shouted the leader.

"Where is he?"

"Where is he?" echoed a dozen voices.

Leon said nothing, but stood in front of the door with his teeth clenched and his face like marble. He instinctively held the stick in front of him as if it were a bar.

The mob surrounded him in an instant. Every man was excited, panting, wild-eyed, angry, thirsting for blood. They were fiercer than lions or tigers or hyenas or leopards.

Men can be more fierce than animals.

Their eyes gleamed; their teeth gleamed; their nostrils were distended; their chests heaved; their sinews and muscles were strained and taut. Their limbs were rigid. Their hands gripped their weapons. They were savage.

"He went in the house," shouted one of the men.

"In the house."

"In the house."

"The house!"

"House!"

"House!"

"House!" shouted the mob.

"Open the door!" said another.

"Open!"

"Open!"

"The door!"

"Door!"

"Door!"

"Door!"

"Door!" the mob shouted.

Leon could say nothing; all he could do was to hold the stick in front of him as if he would bar the way.

"Get out of the way," said one of the men, menacing Leon with a club.

"Out!"

"Way!"

"Out!"

“Way!”

“Way!”

“Out!”

“Out!”

“Out!” echoed the crowd.

Leon stood his ground with his back to the door.

One of the men tried to push him one side. Leon raised the stick to ward off the man's hand.

“You won't?” said the man. “Take that then,” and he brought his club down on Leon's head.

Leon threw his hands up wildly, gave a groan and fell to the ground.

The crowd started back when they saw him fall and stood looking on in dead silence.

The sight of the prostrate man sobered the mob and most of them ran away. Three of the men remained. They lifted his head and felt his heart.

“He is only stunned,” said one of them.

“Thank God,” said the others.

They then knocked at the door.

Millicent looked out of the window and when she saw Leon lying on the stoop insensible, she screamed and came to the door. She opened it and fell on her knees beside Leon.

“He is only stunned; he will be all right in a few minutes,” said one of the men.

They carried him into the parlor and laid him on a lounge.

One of the men got some water and Millicent bathed his head. The men then hastened away.

In a few minutes he opened his eyes in a confused way.

After a while he smiled as he said to Millicent:

“Do you think I’m a coward now?”

“I never did,” she said. “I always knew you were brave and you are brave.”

Leon took her head in his hands and kissed her.

Just at that moment Mr. Sinclair came in. He took Leon by the hand as he said:

“Leon, you are a brave man. Millicent, I will trust you to his care.”

CHAPTER LIII.

“VOTE NO.”

THE bill for the repeal of the Limited Capital law came up in the Legislature for the final vote.

Both sides were there in full force. Everything had been done by the opposition to defeat the bill. All sorts of obstructive measures and dilatory motions had been exhausted, but as one of the repealers said, “The bill has swaggered through the house as if it owned it.”

Notwithstanding this there was an element of uncertainty about the final passage which kept the nerves of the leaders at the highest tension.

Wilmot had been up all night, as he said, “stiffening the backbones of the weaklings.”

“If everything goes right we have a clear majority of ten,” said Griffin.

Wilmot brought Lizzie to the house and gave her a front seat in the gallery.

As the preliminary business of the house was proceeding, Wilmot dashed about from member to member to make sure that they were loyal.

“Well, Lawton,” he said to one of the members, “is everything all right?”

The man moved uneasily as he said: "I sort of think, Mr. Wilmot, that I had kinder think I'll vote the other way, 'cause——"

The man's manner as well as his words sent a chill through Wilmot's heart. He turned pale as he looked at the man for a second; then he burst out:

"What do you mean, you scoundrel? Didn't you promise—didn't they give you——" here he broke off.

The attention of the other members were attracted more by Wilmot's vehement manner than by his voice.

Lawton looked around uneasily as he said:

"I—I may vote for it, but—yer know I can't tell how things are going just yet; you see it's kind of risky."

"See here," said Wilmot, fiercely, "you just vote or I will see that you are——"

"I am willing to vote," said the man, "but——"

"There must be no buts about it. Do you hear?" said Wilmot in a loud voice. "You must vote for the repeal, or——"

"No intimidation," cried one of the opposition in a loud tone, coming over to Lawton's seat.

Several other members shouted: "What's the matter?"

There was considerable disturbance and the speaker called for order.

"Mr. Speaker," said one of the members,

“Mr. Conover,” said the speaker, recognizing him.

“Mr. Speaker,” resumed Mr. Conover, “there seems to be intimidation going on here, and I appeal to the chair to stop it.”

“There can be no intimidation on the floor of this house. The members know their rights. The house will preserve order,” said the speaker.

There were some savage remarks indulged in by Wilmot and several of the opposition as he went on his rounds among the repealers.

The opposition gathered around Lawton, but he was as unsatisfactory in his answers to them as to Wilmot.

Meanwhile the routine business had been finished and the vote on the Repeal bill reached in its regular order.

Wilmot was in a horribly nervous condition. He had had very little sleep for several days, and his nerves were all in a jangle. The Lawton incident rattled him badly.

Several of the other members had acted in such a way as to shake his confidence in them.

He rushed out into the lobby; a number of the promoters of the repeal were there. Wilmot imagined they looked scared.

“Where is Jason and Miller?” he asked.

“They will be here soon,” said one of the promoters.

“They ought to be here now,” he said.

He noticed Stilpool and a number of the opposition in the lobby; they seemed calm and collected.

He heard the clerk's voice calling the roll, and he rushed back on to the floor.

"How is it?" he asked one of the repealers.

"It seems to be all right," said the man.

"Seems?" he asked, "ain't you sure?"

Just then one of his friends beckoned to him and he rushed over to him.

"What's the matter?" he asked eagerly.

"Johnson seems to have flunked."

"What?" he cried, "impossible!"

"Yes, it seems so."

"Where is he?"

"There he is with Horton."

"Send him here."

The man left. He returned in a moment.

"Well?" said Wilmot.

"Says he can't come," said the man, breathlessly.

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know anything. How is the vote—so far, I mean?"

"All right, I think."

"Think—didn't you keep tally?"

"Yes, I tried to, but there's some——"

"Who does know anything? How did Cory vote?"

"Oh, he was all right."

“Sure?”

“Yes-es,” said the man trying to recollect.

“Oh, go to——, you don’t know anything.”

Wilmot’s was the sixtieth name on the roll.

He borrowed a tally sheet from one of his friends.

It was not correctly marked.

He turned to go to the lobby again, but at that moment the clerk called the name of “George Ward” that brought the call within five of his own name and he waited.

One of the repealers was just coming in from the lobby. He seized him by the arm:

“Go and tell Miller to send me word how Wallace stands.”

“He isn’t there,” said the man.

“Tell Jason then.”

“He isn’t there either.”

“Isn’t there? Where is he?”

Just then a page handed him a note. It was in Lizzie’s handwriting.

He read it. He turned pale and the perspiration burst out on his forehead.

He clutched the note in his hand as he turned and glared up at the ladies’ gallery.

Lizzie was still in one of the front seats. As she caught his eye she arose. In her right hand she held a small white handkerchief. Her face was all excitement. She raised her right hand and made an

emphatic gesture with it. The handkerchief flashed up and then down.

Then came the monotonous voice of the clerk.

“Augustus Wilmot.”

Wilmot's eyes glared. He trembled all over. He stared at Lizzie and tried to read what her face was saying. If he only had a moment to speak to her, to go out into the lobby. He would have given anything for five minutes' time.

Again came the monotonous voice of the clerk.

“Augustus Wilmot.”

Wilmot again looked at Lizzie and again the emphatic gesture of the hand with the white handkerchief, which looked like a flash.

For long years after, Wilmot saw that handkerchief in his dreams at night, and it always carried with it the same feeling of horror. It was the inviolable accompaniment of a nightmare to him. Many a time he screamed out in terror as in his dreams a white handkerchief would flash on his vision.

Some one touched him on the shoulder and said “Vote.”

It was like an electric shock and he shouted, “No.”

The white handkerchief flashed up to Lizzie's eyes and she sank into her seat with an exclamation of relief, and then she wept silently.

In an instant there was a hubbub. Everybody was talking at once.

The leader of the Repealers had voted against the repeal.

As Wilmot sank into his chair, he let Lizzie's note fall. One of the members picked it up and read it.

He whispered its contents to another.

It read thus:

"Miller, Jasen and Hayden have been arrested for bribing. Your only hope is to vote no. Please vote no for my sake. Won't you? Lizzie."

Its contents went round the chamber with the rapidity of a thought.

There were wild inquiries: "What's the matter?" "What will we do?" "Where is Sinclair?"

But there was no time for inquiry. The voting was in progress.

One of the repealers moved to suspend the voting. The speaker ruled the motion out of order.

To gain time one of the members made a speech explaining his vote. Other members rushed to the lobby where the news of the arrest was confirmed.

Then a panic seized the repealers.

Charles Anderson, one of the first to vote in the affirmative, jumped to his feet and was recognized by the speaker. He said: "Mr. Speaker, I desire to change my vote from yea to nay."

Instantly a dozen others were on their feet shouting: "Mr. Speaker," "Mr. Speaker," "Mr. Speaker," and as they were recognized, they changed their votes.

When the voting was finished it was found that the measure was defeated by a unanimous vote.

To clinch the vote and prevent its being brought up again that session, some one moved to re-consider.

Not a man dared to vote for a re-consideration.

Then there was a motion to adjourn which was carried instantly, the repealers hastened to their homes and destroyed the stock they had secured and every other evidence of bribery.

A great many of the repealers fled the country, fearing prosecution.

Some people talked strongly of having the leading repealers punished, but wiser counsel prevailed and animosities were buried in the general rejoicing.

Limited Capital Leagues became permanent institutions established in every village and through their agencies violations of the Limited Capital law were detected and stopped.

Practical experience demonstrated the fact that the law prevented monopolies, stopped the accumulation of wealth in the hand of a few, distributed the earnings of the people almost equally among them, caused the population to distribute itself all over the country instead of concentrating in great cities.

There were no gambling or failures in business. The hours of labor were lessened. There was no strife between labor and capital and there was promoted a kindly feeling of sympathetic interest between man and man.

Sunday, Thursday and Saturday were holidays. Thursday was called mid-week rest. One-half of the inhabitants had at least three holidays every other week.

Fifty hours was a legal week's work and practical experience proved that fifty hours of work yielded better result than seventy-two hours.

There was an interchange of entertainments among the people of the different villages which kept the citizens in a pleasant condition of excitement both summer and winter.

* * * * *

In the month of May, one mid-week rest day, there was a great gathering at the house of General Sinclair.

Mr. Stilpool was there and so was Mr. Hiton, Mr. Reed, Dr. Clark and his wife. Grace Kirby was there, too, just as impetuous as ever. Lizzie was there having little confidential chats with everybody and wondering why everybody seemed to like her confidential talk. Gus Wilmot, her husband, was there loving, happy and rested, as he said:

"Well, I believe now we are better off than if we were bothered trying to keep a lot of riches."

There were a great many other people there and among them Millicent and Leon. Everybody brought Millicent a bouquet of flowers and flowers were heaped up all around her.

That was the way Millicent and Leon were married.



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